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[FIRST IMPRESSIONS.]

VERA'S VENTURE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"So Fair Her Face," &c., &c.

CHAPTER IV.

RETROSPECTIVE.

Two souls with but a single thought,
Two hearts that beat as one.

WHEN the week had elapsed and no answer came to Vera's letter her landlady told her without any hesitation that she did not believe that any such people existed as those to whom she had written, and accused her, as she had done to her cousin in speaking of her, of merely wishing to gain time and shelter by pretending to expect an answer.

Vera denied the charge indignantly, but the angry woman refused to believe her, threatened to give her in charge to the police, and finally turned her out of doors on a dark, wet night to find shelter where she could.

She had nothing to take away, every portable article she possessed had been got rid of to supply her with food.

She had only a little packet of letters and papers which had belonged to her mother and which she placed in her bosom.

"They shall help me," she murmured, "I have my uncle's promise to my dead mother. I will claim the shelter of the parish for this one night, and then I will beg my way to Milverstone,

and shame my heartless cousin by my rags and destitution."

She had a proud and bitter spirit, and the temptation to end all her woes in the friendly river was strong upon her, but she turned away from it with a resolute will and tight-set lips, and plunged into the squalid district abutting on the canal.

"Not till I have shamed and humiliated her," she said, bitterly, as she went up to a passing policeman and asked him to direct her to the nearest place where she could get parish relief, "and then it matters little if I die at her door."

The man directed her and looked after her with curiosity.

"She's not one of that sort," he said to himself, "and yet she's after no good, I could see it in her face. I'll keep my eye on her."

But she was out of sight already, and other things came before him that were of more importance than a stray girl.

And Vera struggled on through the rain, which had begun to come down in a sheet, towards the turning which she imagined was the one he had pointed out.

She must find shelter somewhere, and it should be part of her revenge on her cousin to proclaim the fact that Sir Darcie Rivers's niece had been obliged to ask the parish to take her in.

It was very dark, and she had no idea of the district she was in, and she took first one wrong turning, then another, till she found herself in an open space that she was sure could not be right.

The rain blinded her, and she turned sharply round, made one step forwards on her new way,

and the next moment was fighting for her life in dark, deep water.

Once she came to the surface, but the cold was intense, and she could not draw the breath that she struggled for.

She saw a light somewhere, was conscious of the descending rain beating on the water with a hissing sound, and then all was blank and she knew no more.

Neville Delamere was troubled more than he would have liked to admit at the rencontre that had taken place between him and his lady love at the London terminus.

"What Quixotic notion has she taken into her head now?" he asked himself as he walked away, after seeing the ladies into a cab. "Going to take Vera Rivers to Milverstone, is she? And this new-found Miss Rivers is her cousin, and — Bah! I am dreaming. Surely such a monstrous thing can't happen as a stranger and an impostor very likely being taken to her arms in that way. Forewarned forearmed they say. I will go to Paradise Crescent—what a sweet name—and find out what my pretty Nellie has been doing there before I go back to Springfield."

Springfield was the name of the pretty, flourishing village near which both his uncle and Miss Rivers resided. Milverstone was the more important estate of the two, and Springfield looked upon itself as belonging to the owners of it altogether. Miss Rivers's home was always called "The House" among the simple folks who resided there, and the occupier thereof looked up to as lord of the manor. "Raybrook," as Mr. Blennerhasset's house was

called, was all very well, and indeed was as large as Milverstone, but it had not the importance of the baronet's seat in the eyes of the villagers, nor were the worthy squire and his wife thought so much of, in spite of their never-failing kindness, as pretty, wilful Nellie with her indiscriminate charities and her sympathies for everyone that was in trouble whether they were deserving or not.

"I can't help it, Aunt Sarah," she said one day, when her uncle's wife had been taking her to task for going to see the wife of a notorious criminal who had been caught red-handed in theft and was very properly doing a term of imprisonment. "I daresay she is a very wicked woman—you say so, and that is quite enough—but she's hungry, and so are the children, and she's ill and can't work to help them, and I don't think that hunger and suffering are at all conducive to the state of mind you want to bring her to. I'll feed her, auntie dear, and make her better if I can, and you can give her tracts and preach to her afterwards. She'll have strength to see the error of her ways then I daresay, poor thing."

Lady Rivers turned up her eyes and held up her hands in horror, but she could do nothing with her niece, and she openly declared that such principles as Nellie held, and was not ashamed to acknowledge, would inevitably bring ruin on her and all belonging to her in the end. No wonder she wanted her married to her son and safe under the care of someone whom she could help to guide and direct.

But this is a digression. It was Neville Delamere who was standing on the station platform and making up his mind to go to the place Nellie had told him she was bound for.

"I must not be caught watching," he said. "Here, cabby."

A hansom drew up at his call.

"Do you know Paradise Crescent, somewhere off the Waterloo Road? I'm sure that was the name."

"Can't say I do, sir, but I'll soon find it."

"All right. Inquire, will you? and set me down somewhere near it. I don't want to be seen hunting for it, you understand."

"Very good, sir."

Plenty of time had elapsed since Nellie and Mrs. Carrington had departed for it to be quite safe for Neville Delamere to follow them without any fear of their seeing him, and by the time the cab drew up at a dingy street close by they were out of sight on their way back to the station.

"Is this the place?" he asked.

"Second turning on the right, sir," was the reply, and he paid and dismissed the man and entered the narrow street pointed out to him.

"It is a sly place," he muttered as he went up to the door of the house indicated on the address Nellie had shown him. "A queer place for Miss Rivers, of Milverstone, to be seeking her relations in. I wonder if I shall find her. Miss Vera Rivers?" he said, interrogatively, as the door opened and an extremely dirty and unkempt woman appeared. "does she live here?"

"Bless me, here's someone else asking for her," she said, half to herself, before answering the question. "No, sir, she don't."

"Where then, may I ask?" Mr. Delamere said, and the woman thought that he looked relieved at her answer.

"I don't know, sir; she did live here."

"And you don't know where she is gone?"

"No, sir, no more than a baby; she went off in a huff like, we had a few words about rent, you see—I can't afford to keep people for nothing."

"Of course not, and the young lady couldn't pay you."

"Hadt a rap," the woman replied, "and put me off with fine promises, said she had relations and was going to write to 'em. She did write, for my Liza posted the letter, but they never answered, and I kept her a week, and then—"

"Turned her out, of course."

"Well, and I had a right to, though I don't know how you came to know it."

"I only guessed it, it is the way of land-ladies," was the quiet reply. "But I am not interested in her, I only want to know how

much information you were able to give the ladies that came here to see her."

"Well, none at all, sir, and that's a fact," the woman said. "I could only tell them what I have told you, that up to last night she was here and that I don't know where she's gone now. I'm sorry now for the words I had with her, for they told me that what she said was true and that they had come to take her home with them."

"And you are sure they did not find her?"

"As sure as I can be of anything. They couldn't go hunting for her through the streets, and—thank you kindly, sir, I'm sure, and I hope they'll find her if they want her," she added, as he put some money into her hand and ended the interview. "And I wonder what he wants to know anything about her for? No good, I'll be sworn. He looked savage enough when he was asking about her. I don't believe I've heard the last of her yet."

The last for many a long day, and of course Neville Delamere only made the inquiries in the interests of Nellie. She would get herself into a scrape, he was sure, if she went rushing about after all the impostors that chose to write to her. It was much better that this mysterious girl had disappeared, and he hoped from his heart that she would never turn up again. He could not share his pretty Nellie's love with every stranger she chose to make a pretence of.

He went back to Springfield next day, very much relieved in his mind at the notion that Miss Rivers had not found this suddenly missing cousin, and was warmly welcomed, by one at least, of the ladies at Milverstone who he presented himself there.

"No, I didn't find my cousin," Nellie said, when they were together for a brief while. Mrs. Carrington would never permit it if she could help it, and drove Nellie nearly frantic sometimes by hindering Neville's kisses and endearments. "And you needn't hug me like that, as if you were glad. I'm very unhappy about it."

"I'm not hugging you on account of Miss Vera Rivers," Neville replied, repeating the offence, and taking an unforbidden kiss from Nellie's rosy lips. "It's all on my own account. I assure you, but I am glad for all that you did not find her—she'd have come between us somehow."

"No, she wouldn't—she shan't, for I mean to find her yet. And do go farther away. There's Mrs. Carrington coming along the passage. Gracious, do sit down."

Mrs. Carrington was coming along the passage, and must have both seen and heard the hurry with which Mr. Delamere found his seat, for he had hardly gained it when she entered the room, and it would have been very awkward for her to have caught him kneeling at Nellie's feet, as he had been doing. But she was wise in her generation, and made no sign.

"I have a piece of news for you, my dear," she said, turning to Nellie.

"What is it?" asked that young lady, without looking up. She was conscious of a flushed face and a slight agitation of manner.

"Only about the doctor," the elder lady replied. "You won't be troubled any more with that red-headed man you dislike so much. The new man is come."

Springfield had been without a resident doctor for some time. The parish was not a rich one and the neighbourhood exceptionally healthy, so the small practice which the last man had left when he died some months ago had literally gone a begging. Nellie had been sorely troubled about the ministrations of the man from the neighbouring parish, whom she declared was rough and boorish, and whom she declined to credit with any skill whatever. It was enough to make anyone ill to look at him, she said, and certainly he was far from handsome, being red-haired, as Mrs. Carrington had said, and altogether plebeian in his appearance. Nellie came to own she had done him an injustice before her knowledge of him ended, and to know that a very rough exterior may sometimes cover a great amount of skill and patience.

"Who is going to take pity on us?" she asked.

"A Mr. Leicester—Harry Belton Leicester—for I saw his card, and Mrs. Deacon says he is quite a gentleman. I am afraid he is not come at all too soon, for the Deacons are afraid that some sort of fever is breaking out in the village—down at the lower end, where those brick-layers live."

"They're always having fevers, or something of the sort there," said Nellie, gravely. "They won't attend to anything one says to them. Good gracious me, Mr. Delamere, what is the matter? Are you ill?"

"No—why?"

"You look it, that's all. You look as if you have seen a ghost, or were going to faint, or something."

Nellie looked terribly frightened as she spoke, and he hastened to undeceive her.

"I am not ill, I assure you," he said, "nor have I seen anything more than you two ladies. But hearing the name Mrs. Carrington has just mentioned was something like seeing one. I had a notion that Belton Leicester was dead."

"You know him then," Nellie said, looking up at him in surprise.

"I did. We were boys at school together."

"And you have never seen him since. How funny."

"I did not say that. I have seen him since, but I had got the notion somehow that he was dead. I don't think he'll suit this place."

"Perhaps you hope he won't, Mr. Delamere."

It was Mrs. Carrington who spoke, and from some intuition or other she divined that the new doctor and Neville Delamere would be antagonistic. There was something in the expression of the young man's face that looked very like fear when she mentioned the name of the new comer. Perhaps he knew of something in the former life of Mr. Delamere that would not be to his credit if it were told, and she gave him credit for plenty that was dark and not fit for ladies' ears in his career. She was right. Neville Delamere was young in years but old in the vices and follies of the day. And it had been fear—a cruel, cowardly fear that had filled his heart at the mention of the young surgeon's name.

They had been boys together at school, friends then, and swearing an eternal friendship when the time came for them to part and each go his own way in the world.

And they had met again to be enemies to all time, and with a woman's broken heart and ruined name crying for vengeance from the gulf that lay between them.

They had met in the busy world of London, as young fellows do meet, Neville Delamere pretending to study art in the listless fashion in which he studied everything, and Belton Leicester at his work in the hospitals, a careful, earnest student, making his way as such men do make it, without any parade on his part or stir on the part of others.

Love had come to them both, and for the same girl, a pretty creature, whose gentle face and trim figure earned her many a pound as a model.

A good girl too, model though she was, and Belton Leicester would have made her his wife. He had no friends to be horrified at such a step, and he loved Lettice Gower truly and sincerely.

But Neville Delamere had the longer purse and the more winning tongue, and Lettice was weak and let him win her.

Belton Leicester, going away to a country situation, gave her up, with what a heart wrench only he himself could have told, to the man who, as he believed, loved her sincerely.

He went his way alone, leaving the girl he loved so dearly to be the honoured wife of his friend, and came back to London only a brief year after to see her die in a hospital ward of the shame and grief of being abandoned.

They had taken her out of the river where she had thrown herself to get rid of the burden of her existence, and it was the faithful lover she had discarded who closed her eyes when Heaven mercifully took her away from this world and its sufferings for ever.

CHAPTER V.

FACE TO FACE.

One may smile and smile and be a villain.

It was the purest chance that led Mr. Leicester to take the very poor business that was offered him at Springfield.

He was not wholly dependent on his profession, for he had come into a little money through the death of a grateful patient to whom he had been very attentive.

He was something of an enthusiast, and fancied that he could be of more use in this obscure parish perhaps than working his way in the ordinary course of a doctor's career.

He longed to help to elevate the poor and to widen their ideas, to help the mothers to understand how to keep their children healthy and their homes pure; in short, he had planned out for himself a life of usefulness like many other young and ardent men, and hoped by hard work to drive away the heartache that came sometimes unbidden and brought Lettice in her beauty and her sorrow too vividly to his mind.

He had not forgotten his love and its ending yet—he never would, though time might soften the sting of it.

It was two years old now and it was a very present grief still.

He was a reticent and undemonstrative man where his innermost feelings were concerned, and no one knowing him only superficially would have given him credit for the intense passion that had swept over him like a whirlwind and left its traces in certain hard lines about his mouth and a weary look in his dark eyes.

He was a handsome man, with an oval face and fine, regular features, and, more than this, with goodness in his face as well as beauty, a man who would never tell anything but the truth come what would of it, and would go to the death if need be for the right.

A man who would be in some sort thrown away in such a place as Springfield, but who would come upon the little village like a sunbeam and point the way to better things than the ignorance and confusion which had reigned there till now.

Sir Darcie Rivers had been a somewhat lax ruler. He was a proud and sensitive man, and after his wife's death he had left things pretty much to his steward, who had more contempt than pity for the struggles of the poor, and let them go their own way and muddle on as they could.

When Nellie began her reign with far more of practical good sense than ever her father could boast of, and no experience to guide her, she rather made matters worse than better.

She made the poor people adore her and flung help indiscriminately right and left like an impulsive girl as she was.

The sight of any one hungry or in trouble was enough for her, the hunger must be appeased and the trouble must be mended somehow, and she generally went the wrong way to work.

The vicar and his wife, who were her very good friends, did their best to regulate the charity that was so indiscriminate, and Nellie's liberal hand helped them to alleviate many a case of distress that they would otherwise have had to leave unaided.

They did what they could, but the arrival of the new doctor with health, energy, and, what was better than both, good sense, was hailed by them with delight.

He looked something too large for the little room in which he had taken up his abode, as he stood looking out of the window after he had been to call on the clergyman and his pleasant, genial wife.

He was tall and well-made, with lithe, strong limbs and great muscular strength. He had educated his muscles as well as his mind, and the result was a physique hardly to be matched anywhere for condition and appearance.

The doctor's house, as it was always called, which had been occupied by the medical man of the place for many years, was shut up now and

in such a dilapidated condition that Mr. Leicester declined to have anything to do with it.

"I don't want a house," he said, "and I don't like mice and rats, to say nothing of owls," a pair of which inconvenient lodgers had taken up their abode in the kitchen chimney, "I must get someone to take me in till I can see myself where I should like to live."

There was the woman who had "done for" the last doctor he was told, and he took the tiny rooms for the present, feeling very much amused at the contrast between their size and his own stalwart proportions.

The last doctor who had been "done for" by the woman of the house had been a little man of meek manners and feeble appearance, and small room had sufficed for him and his belongings.

Mr. Leicester was different, and the good woman was sorely dismayed at the number of cases and trunks she was expected to stow away—though she took a fancy to her new lodger at once, and declared herself ready to do anything for so nice a gentleman.

His face was very grave as he stood at his little window on this fine autumn day. He had been to the vicarage and he had heard a great deal about the parish and his neighbours, both rich and poor.

He had learned who occupied the two great houses of the place, and he had gathered the information casually given that Neville Delamere was in the neighbourhood and tolerably popular to boot.

"Again," he muttered, as he recalled what he had been told, "I did hope I should never see his false face again in this world. And winning the love of a pure young girl. The false hound! Shall I expose him, or shall I let him go on in his villainy, and see another heart and soul ruined for this world and the next by his wicked lies?"

"A gentleman asking for you, sir."

The landlady entered with a card in her soapy hand, it was her washing day, and she had rushed away from her tub to answer the peremptory double knock, which Mr. Leicester in his preoccupation did not hear.

The visitor, whoever it was, had approached the house from the other side and had not passed his window.

"Who is it?" he asked, not much in the mood for company. "I would rather not see anyone just now."

"It's Mr. Delamere, sir."

"Mr. who?"

"Mr. Delamere, sir."

She spoke as if it were an honour to have him call at her house, and so indeed it was.

The villagers looked up with a proper awe and respect to the occupants of Raybrook and Milverstone.

"Show Mr. Delamere in."

The voice was so sharp and icy that she stared at her new lodger in dismay.

"He's got a temper," she said to herself as she hurried away to admit Neville Delamere. "His eyes just flashed as he spoke—Heaven send I don't do anything to offend him."

The two men who had faced each other last by the death-bed of the woman they both loved—for Belton Leicester had hunted up his rival and made him come to the poor creature he had wronged—stood together in the little room, looking at one another.

Neville was the first to speak.

"Look here, Leicester," he said, boldly enough, though there was a nervous trepidation in his voice and manner that showed him to be but ill at ease, "I came to—"

"To take the bull by the horns, I suppose," Belton Leicester said, taking no notice of the hand that the other one held out to him. "To find out whether I, the obscure surgeon with no particular position here, was likely to turn out friend or foe to the envied nephew of Mr. Biennersasset."

"Well, not quite that. I did want to see whether you were likely to be friendly or not—I hate to be ill friends with people, and—"

"And there is not the slightest necessity for there to be either friendship or enmity between

us now. I should prefer being an utter stranger to you, Mr. Delamere."

"Ah, but we can't be quite that you know. I have already told Miss— well, a friend of mine, that I knew you once."

"Miss Rivers, I suppose, the young lady you want for your wife. Is she the young lady?"

"Yes, she is. But, hang it all, how do you know anything about it, no one knows anything about it yet?"

"Everyone talks about it pretty openly," Mr. Leicester replied. "I rather wonder you bragged of your knowledge of me, knowing what I could tell Miss Rivers if I chose."

"Ah, but you won't tell her; that just what I wanted to see you for. It's all gone by a long time now, and there's no good in raking things up that are disagreeable."

"And there would be less good in letting a scoundrel like you—oh, I am not going to choose my words in speaking to you—marry a pure, innocent girl, as I hear she is. Why should I let you link your black life to her bright innocence when a word from me would stop such a profanation?"

"Because she loves me, and I love her. Because she would not believe any story against me if you swore it on your knees. Because, if you will have it, and I am not a man to boast of that sort of thing, I am a different fellow to what I was when that wretched business took place. Besides—"

"Besides what?"

"She was not worth it all—Lettice Gower, I mean—she was—"

What she was he never uttered, for Belton Leicester's hand was on his mouth before he could speak another word, and he had caught him by the collar with a grip that threatened to strangle him.

"Stop," he said, in a low, hissing tone, "don't say any more or I shall kill you. I think. Have you no more reverence for the girl whom you murdered as surely as if you had stabbed her to the heart with your wicked hand than to slander her? You shall not do it in my hearing. My poor little love!"

He flung the speechless coward from him and drew himself up.

"This is not the way to receive a guest, Mr. Delamere," he said, in an icy tone, "but you have yourself to thank for it. How dared you breathe a word about her to me who loved her so, who love her memory still as man never loved woman before? If I gave you your deserts I should publish the story through the whole parish—ay, through the whole world."

"But you won't, Leicester? you won't undo all my prospects, brighter now than they ever were, than they ever could be again? If I lost this chance, and it is not only myself that I think of, it would break her heart if she thought me wicked, and—"

"Go your way," Belton Leicester said, with bitter scorn, "I don't want to interfere with you. Make love to the young lady if you choose. Win her if you can, but be true to her. Slight her or neglect her when you have won her heart and, as sure as there is a Heaven above us, she shall have the whole story of Lettice Gower from beginning to end to show her what a false villain she has given herself to."

"I have won her heart already," Neville Delamere said, "and in hurting me you would hurt her, but it is a secret as yet and you must keep it for the present."

"A secret? when it was almost the first thing I heard when I came here?"

"It is no secret that I care for her. I dare swear that the blindest fool in the parish has seen that much. A fellow can't always hide love. Ah, you needn't sneer, Leicester, it is love, and true love too, the first I ever felt."

"We won't argue that point. Go your way and make yourself master of Milverstone by what lies you may. I will not spoil sport nor chatter, you may make sure of that."

"But you and I, Leicester, we can be friends. Let the past die, it is so long ago."

"I will let it die when I can forget my love's dead face," was Leicester's grave reply, "when I forget that but for you she might have been

alive now, my honoured wife. There can be no friendship between you and me, Neville Delamere, but there need be no enmity. Go your own way and leave me to go mine."

Even that much was something, Leicester was not going to tell Nellie, and Neville Delamere walked back again to Raybrook in high spirits.

"It will be all right," he said to himself. "I shall have Milverstone and my bonnie Nellie into the bargain. The fellow carried it with such a high hand that I really did not know how much he might have in his head. It's a horrid nuisance that Lettice Gower affair cropping up in this fashion. No one else knows anything about it, that's one comfort, and he won't tell now. He has such wonderful notions of honour. He is not a bit altered, sets up for being so much better than his fellows, as he always did. He knows nothing of what has happened since, that's another good thing. The sooner I can persuade Nellie to marry me the better."

"I suppose I must introduce myself, Mr. Leicester. I am Nellie Rivers."

It was some days after the new doctor's arrival before he saw the young heiress whose name was in everybody's mouth, and when he did it was at the bedside of a poor woman whose household cares and many children had worn her down so that when sickness did come it found her an easy prey and laid her on what would in all probability have been her death-bed but for Nellie's timely ministrations in the shape of nourishing things and comforts of all sorts.

Belton Leicester bowed to the fair young girl and wondered no more at the praises he had heard bestowed on her on all sides.

He took the hand she held out to him with such engaging frankness and wondered what the pure soul that he saw looking out of her eyes could have in common with the coarse mind and black heart of Neville Delamere.

"Oh, if I dare warn her," he said to himself, "if I could only save her from him."

And then he talked to her on indifferent subjects and learned a great deal from her about the people who were to be his special charge and more particulars of the case over which they had met than he had been able to gather from the sick woman herself.

"They will talk to me you see," Nellie said, in half apology, "I am like one of themselves and I hear all about it."

"That's just what I want to be, one of themselves," the doctor said, kindly, as he took the woman's hand and spoke to her.

And he bade her be of good cheer and she would be well soon.

And then he bade Nellie good bye and went his way to find her pretty face and sweet voice come sadly between him and his work for the rest of the day.

CHAPTER VI.

BETROTHED.

*My love has sworn, with sealing kiss,
For me to live—to die.*

"I must say, my dear, that I think Lady Rivers quite right."

"Right! To forget she was a lady and scold like a Billingsgate fishwoman. I don't think she was right to interfere at all, it is no business of hers."

The speakers were Mr. and Mrs. Blennerhasset, who had returned from their Paris trip and were once more at Raybrook.

They had come in the nick of time as it seemed, for there was what Neville called a "row royal" going on at Milverstone.

The good lady had come, as she very often did, to pay Nellie a visit, and assure herself, as she told her husband, that the misguided girl was not doing anything specially disgraceful.

Ever since her niece's rejection of her son she had chosen to believe her guilty of every enormity that could be imagined, and deemed it her duty to drop in upon the household at all sorts

of times and take them by surprise. The servants resented her interference—as well they might, for there was not a better ordered household to be found anywhere than that over which Miss Rivers and Mrs. Carrington presided.

Nellie had a peculiar faculty for management, and her companion was the very soul of order, and directed matters in a much better fashion than the baronet's wife, who had a way of worrying and watching her servants, which was alike harassing to them and lowering to her own dignity.

She could not understand that a good servant is a person to be valued and trusted, and by always assuming that those about her would cheat her if they could, she contrived to live in a constant state of suspicious ferment.

The smoothness with which everything at Milverstone went annoyed her, and she insisted that Nellie was being robbed right and left, and exposed herself to some very disagreeable rebuffs from the servants in her endeavours to prove that some of them at least must be dishonest.

In vain her husband ordered her to mind her own business and let Nellie alone.

It was for the girl's good, she declared, and she and her eldest daughter, a girl a trifle younger than her cousin, took every opportunity they could of quartering themselves on Nellie and enjoying the good things that she showered upon them without stint.

She was hospitality itself, and though she was always glad when her aunt's impromptu visits came to an end, she never failed in kindness to her and Millicent when they stayed at her house.

Millicent Rivers was a sufficiently pretty girl without any great pretensions to being either clever or attractive, but she was inordinately vain and miserably jealous of her cousin, and she felt as if she had been in some fashion deprived of her rights by Milverstone belonging to Nellie.

The estate ought to have gone with the title, she declared, forgetting that her uncle had bought the place back from the people to whom it had been sold in his father's impecunious days, and that there was no entail or any reason whatever why it should not have been left to his daughter.

Miss Milly would accept whatever her cousin chose to give her and sponge upon her, as narrow-minded natures will, but she never gave her credit for any goodness or generosity.

"It was the least Nellie could do," she would say, "if she had done what mamma had wished to and married Darcie, there would have been some amends to them all for the shameful way in which things had been left."

It was Millicent who had been the cause of the explosion to which Mrs. Blennerhasset referred.

She burst into her cousin's boudoir one morning in her usual brusque fashion. She found Nellie—but not alone, Neville Delamere was there, and he held Miss Rivers in his arms in a fashion that only had one interpretation.

Millicent uttered an exclamation of surprise, and the lovers turned sharply round, startled and annoyed at the intrusion.

They had deemed themselves alone and had forgotten, as lovers are apt to do, that there was anyone in the world besides themselves.

"I beg your pardon," said Millicent, after a moment's dismayed pause, "I had no idea—"

"Of course not, Millie dear," Nellie said, calmly enough, though her face was crimson and her heart was beating furiously as she uttered the words, "you have never been enlightened."

"But we had better enlighten her now, eh, Nellie?" said Neville Delamere, encircling her waist with his arm once more and facing the staring Millicent. "Your cousin has promised to be my wife, Miss Millicent, so the embrace which seems to have shocked you so much was my right."

"Your wife, Mr. Delamere? Nellie!"

"Yes—why not?"

Millicent could hardly have spoken the "why not."

She had a fancy that she should have liked handsome, reckless Mr. Delamere for herself, but he seemed strangely insensible to her charms.

It was accounted for now—that sly Nellie, who seemed to stand between her and all the good things of this life, had taken also this good-looking Neville Delamere.

What did she want with him? He was no catch for her, and he would have been for the baronet's daughter.

"Oh, of course there is no reason why it shouldn't be," she said, somewhat spitefully. "I was surprised, that is all, and so will mamma be," she added, "she has no idea, I am sure, that any such happy event is in anticipation."

"Your cousin is an amiable girl, darling," Neville said to Nellie, when the door had closed behind Miss Millicent, "she'll bring the old party down on you without delay—shall I stay and help you through your troubles?"

"No," said Nellie, laughing, "I think I am a match for my aunt. I don't like the prospect though, she can be very violent when she is displeased."

"Violent?"

"In words only I mean of course. She forgets that she is a lady, and storms in the coarsest way."

"Ah, well, you must make some little allowance for her disappointment. She wanted you and Milverstone for that cub of hers—excuse me for calling your relations names. But your Cousin Darcie is a cub, pure and simple."

"Darcie is a very nice fellow, and did as he was bid; I won't have him abused."

"Well, I won't abuse him, and now I had better go, unless I am to stay and help you through the row. There'll be one you know, and a hot one."

"Yes, I know; I won't have you here, you would only make matters worse. You would be sure to say something to aggravate my aunt and make things harder for me."

"That I should. I can't stand my lady at all."

"Well, go then; you may give me a kiss first to strengthen me for my coming trial if you like."

If he liked! he liked to give her half a dozen and then another or two after that, and he only just got away as Lady Rivers came sailing in full of wrath and spite, and proceeded to vent it in her own particular way on the devoted head of her niece.

(To be Continued.)

SUBSTITUTE FOR TAN.—Mr. Christian Heinzerling has patented a process of tanning hides for the purpose of adapting them to the uses of leather which consists in subjecting the raw hides to a solution of alum and zinc dust for the purpose of depositing amorphous alumina in the same, then to a solution of one of the chromic alkalies mixed with alum, or its described equivalent, and chloride of sodium, fixing these in the hides by the chloride of barium, or its described equivalent, and finally greasing or fattening the hides.

RESISTANCE OF STONE BUILDINGS TO FIRE.—According to experiments recently made by Dr. Cutting, State geologist of Vermont, with regard to the resisting power of building-stones to fire, no known natural stone used for building purposes can be called fire-proof. Conglomerates and slates yield readily to the action of heat, and granite is injured beyond cheap and easy repair by a heat that would melt lead. Among the best resisting stones are the brown sandstone, used so largely in New York for fronts. Limestones and marbles are even better than these, but a heat of from 900 deg. to 1,200 deg. is sufficient to calcine them at last into quicklime. In short, most stone buildings are as much damaged by fire as wooden structures are. Brick is, however, rather improved by heat, until the heat is sufficient to vitrify it. Dr. Cutting recommends brick, with soapstone trimmings, as the most fire-proof materials which can be used in building.



[ON THE BEACH.]

THE FORTUNES OF ELFRIDA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Within a Maze," "Wen Without Woeing,"
and other Interesting Stories.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MEETING IN BITTERNESS.

The sight of thee brings sadness to my heart,
And while beneath this humble roof I stand
I dare not grasp the once familiar hand,
But hear a voice that sadly bids us part.

MALCOLM GORDON was not in any way prepared for the meeting with the Duchess of Braxton, and the shock of it was as the blow of a thunderbolt. For a moment he stared at her in terror, but remembering there were other eyes upon him, he shook off the numb feeling and bowed, as he must have done to a slight acquaintance.

"This is an unexpected meeting, Mr. Gordon," said Elfrida, in a low, sweet tone that thrilled through him.

"Yes, duchess," he replied, "I could not have anticipated it."

At this juncture the hostess, learning the title of her visitor, hurriedly gesticulated to her husband to leave the room. He obeyed, and she followed him, unheeded by Elfrida.

"If you had anticipated it, you would have stayed away," she said.

"I think so," he replied. "What good can a meeting do to me?"

"Or to either of us. You are well, I hope?"

"Quite well."

"And prosperous?"

"Yes."

"I am glad to hear it," she said, and there was a pause.

Both were now embarrassed, and neither knew what to say or do. If the simple occupants of the cottage had remained, something might have been said to them, but they had done an evil turn to their visitors by the exercise of their humility in retiring.

"I was not aware you had returned to Easterley," Elfrida said, when the silence was getting oppressive.

"I have been here two months," he replied. "My services in London were no longer required."

"You knew of my coming here?"

"I have seen you many times."

It was an admission made in an unguarded manner, and her curiosity was raised. She glanced at him keenly and asked:

"Where?"

"On the sand-hills," he said. "Of late you have frequently visited them."

She turned to the fire as if to hide her face from him ere she put another question.

"How could you see me? It is a lone spot, and we met no one. Where were you?"

She was resolved upon knowing all. A fearful and dangerous curiosity was upon her. She never thought it anything else than a yearning to know if he still loved her.

"I was in the grove," he said.

"A strange place. Were you alone?"

"I was."

"And there more than once?"

"More than once."

"When I was not there?"

"No—when you were there only. I had discovered your habits of going to the hills and walking there alone with your father."

"Why do you still think of me?" she asked, with a passionate motion of her head and hand.

"Why do you not put me aside as one to be forgotten?"

"Because I cannot."

"Perhaps you have learnt to hate me," she

said, with a sudden brightening in her sad eyes. "You may find pleasure in seeing how I am bowed down—how low I have fallen."

"Oh, no—no!" he exclaimed, "how can you think me so base?"

"It was a passing thought," she said, "springing from the head alone. But I am sorry you still have a care for me."

"You are now what you have been for a long time past," he said, "and what you will ever be to me in life."

It pleased her to hear him talk in this way. She could not resist the influence, and now that they had met the weak points in her armour became apparent.

Both were treading on dangerous ground. Love, be it ever so pure, is never free from passion when it holds a man and woman together, and wild passion has no thought of the road it travels. It is an erring guide.

The pulses of both were beating high. The warm young blood was flowing rapidly through their veins, and both felt the growing influences of the hour. If ever either were tried, they were tried now most bitterly.

"I had a hope," she said, with a melting tenderness in her voice, "that we should never meet again. I shut myself out from your honest love, I wronged my husband by marrying him, and I ruined myself. The penalty is paid—a desert around me on every side."

"Would that I could brighten it," he said, and his voice grew hoarse under his emotion. "There is nothing I would not do to bring you happier days."

He drew a step nearer, and she, hearing him, made a motion with her hand for him to stay. But it was a weak, vacillating request for him to be true to himself and her. All her better resolutions were fading fast. She was gliding down in a deeper pit than she had yet fallen into.

He saw her going, and felt he was gliding thither too. All the awful consequences of the FORBIDDEN rose up before him, but they were

only poor shadows that could not of themselves save them. A hurricane raged in his breast, and laid low his better self as great wind and storm will dash down the oak that has stood for centuries.

With a step made uncertain by nerves unstrung in the tumult he drew up to her side, and in another moment he would have forgotten what was due to her and to herself and pleaded the cause of unholy love. But just then the voice of Carslie Harvard was heard outside, and he drew back.

"Oh, merciful Heaven!" he groaned, "forgive me. Elfrida, I am unworthy of you—more base than the man who robs his fellow of his gold. I will never see you more."

She held out a hand to him, but he dare not touch it.

"If once I hold it in mine I am lost," he answered, and hurriedly left the cottage.

At the door he met Carslie Harvard, but passed him without greeting and hurried down the slope amid the fast-falling rain.

Carslie Harvard came in with a stern look upon his face, and, taking Elfrida by the arm, turned her face towards him.

"Why was that man here?" he asked, "and what has passed between you?"

"The meeting was accidental," replied Elfrida, "and we shall never see each other again. Take me home. I will never risk again what I have suffered to-day."

He wrapped her furs around her, and drawing her arm through his, led her out. They had almost reached the carriage when the old man came hurrying after them, but in hand to offer his apologies for seeming neglect.

"You have not neglected me," said Carslie Harvard, slipping a coin into his hand. "We are leaving thus suddenly because we must hasten home."

"But your honour will come again. I have not shown you the vine, which is the largest hereabouts, and—"

"I will come again if I can," said Carslie Harvard, "but do not detain us now. It is imperative we should return home at once."

He gave the necessary orders to the coachman, who turned the horses' heads and drove rapidly back. The journey was performed in silence, save for the sobs of Elfrida as she clung around her father's neck, with her head nestled on his breast.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WEARY.

And mighty hands forget their manliness,
Driven with the power of a heart-stealing beauty,
And white lips grow dumb.

WHEN the physicians of Easterley, who were two in number, met with a rich patient whose indisposition defied their pills and potions, it was their custom to recommend a change of air, and they always recommended Shingleham.

"You will get as good air there," they said, "as you will in any part of the world, and it has the advantage of being within call of us, if our advantages are further required."

Every place of any size has its medical man or men on whom implicit reliance is placed.

You may hear the people talk of them as something superior to their brethren who have made a great name in the heart of the empire in London, and their more fervent admirers are wont to declare that their pet provincial physician has sturdily resisted an immense amount of pressure once brought upon him by the metropolis to secure his services.

"Here he made his name," they say, "and here he stays in gratitude. He would not be happy with strangers."

The object of such remarks is perfectly aware of them, and in a quiet, discreet, business way fosters the illusion.

He does not say that he has been invited to take the guineas of those in town, but rather remonstrates with those who set such stories afloat.

"I am but a humble man," he says, "doing

my best in a quiet way. It satisfies me if I can do good in my office of healer and live in moderate comfort."

Notwithstanding this humility his nest is very prettily feathered, and his home is replete with such things as men of taste value in a house. He has the best furniture, the rarest china, and some of the oldest port (generally left him by a grateful patient), and has a better carriage than the lord lieutenant of the county—which rather detracts from the simplicity he is supposed to have made.

Humbug as he is, however, he is a thorough good fellow and no worse than others who deal with the bodily infirmities of weak, erring man.

Easterley boasted of two renowned physicians, and each of them during the winter had a profitable patient.

One attended upon Elfrida and the other prescribed for Malcolm Gordon.

In both cases the patient had only yielded to the desire of friends.

The idea of a doctor, with his pulse-feeling, tongue-examining, and incomprehensible prescriptions, being of any service, would have amused them if they could have been amused at all.

Both were suffering from what is called ennui.

They were weary, weary of themselves of the bitterness of their lives and of the world.

Disappointment rankled within them; they yearned for what they felt never could be, and like all who aspire to the impossible—suffered.

Love, in its consequences, was not impossible, for they could have cast aside all the ties around them, ignored the opinion of all good men and women and lived a brief life of unhalloved pleasure, and then have gone to perdition.

That is what too many have done, but they were spared the lasting degradation accompanied by the "worm that never dies."

The memory of the moment of great temptation had left sufficient bitterness behind it.

Elfrida never thought of the meeting in the cottage without a shudder, and Malcolm Gordon dwelt too much upon it.

The past ought to be always put aside by those who resolve to live well for the future.

The two physicians, without acting in concert, gave the same advice.

"The air of Shingleham must be tried," they said, "it seldom fails to brace those who are suffering from languor."

So, entirely without any design and in utter ignorance of their respective movements, Elfrida and Malcolm went down to the same place to try the effect of the sea breeze upon aching hearts.

The place had changed much since the time when Elfrida met Mrs. Harvard upon the pier.

It had grown amazingly, and given birth to a second pier. There was also a little more mingling of the different classes, and a nigger troupe and barrel organ found a considerable amount of favour.

Elfrida went down early in May, accompanied by her friends, and Stapleton Caveall and Annie joined her there, bringing with them a miniature likeness of Stapleton that was a never-failing source of joy and a subject for endless talk to the happy couple.

There never was such a wonderful baby, and for once in a way the parents of that child found listening and credulous friends who believed everything they heard, down to the statement that it had at the age of two months distinctly said "Mamma."

Elfrida spent much of her time with the child and seldom went out except at such hours when most of the visitors were away from the beach.

Malcolm Gordon had apartments at the other end of the town, and he seldom went beyond the cliff on which the house he resided in was built. His two sisters were his companions, and he would pass the day lying upon the crown of turf that covered the chalk cliff, watching the rippling sea and the life below, while they worked with the needle or read to him.

He was not love-sick. His was no case of a

youth pining for a lost love, the feeling that bound him down was deeper rooted than mere slighted affection could be.

Nor had he any bodily illness. He was only weary, weary.

In an ordinary way it is not a pleasing thing to look upon a man who is beaten in a struggle.

We like to see them go on to the end, laughing at wounds and dying with a smile upon their lips—but then it sometimes happens there is nothing to fight against, nothing to conquer. The burden appears to be fixed for evermore, and must be borne—it can never be lifted up.

Malcolm Gordon had come to this belief and sat quiet under his load.

This is a more dangerous state, than one of fierce contest. The man gets slowly crushed, bound down by degrees.

Every day sees him a little lower, with a greater weight about him, every hour sees a recovery of his former elasticity more hopeless.

Isabel and Marian saw him changing before their eyes and were unable to help him.

They could not openly offer any consolation, as indiscreet people might have done, and so laid open fresh wounds with their idle words.

All they could do was to be as they had ever been to him, and true to time.

One morning when the sun was high in the heavens, and the beach below gay with children and their attendants, a man came striding up the cliff by the road from the town with a bull-terrier at his heels.

It was Stapleton Caveall, attended by his faithful Cracker.

Stapleton was in a cheerful mood. The wonderful baby had distinctly spoken another word that morning, a word as incomprehensible to ordinary minds as the ancient writing on the wall, but its mother, with the wisdom of a female Daniel, had interpreted it as "Baby."

For a whole hour the delighted father had hung over the child to hear the word again, but it had spoken like an infant Oracle and had no more to say for the time.

It fell asleep instead, and Mrs. Caveall sent her husband out for a walk while she went to do a little shopping, and so it chanced that his footsteps led him to where Malcolm and his sisters were seated on the cliff.

The recognition was mutual.

"I never expected to see you here," said Stapleton, when the usual greetings were over. "When did you come?"

"A month ago," replied Malcolm, "you are at the other end of the town, I suppose?"

"Yes, I brought my wife to see—" he pulled up suddenly, on finding himself getting upon dangerous ground, "to see Shingleham. It is a rising place you know. They talk of it even in town."

"So I hear," Isabel remarked, "and now it is as good as ruined."

"Ruined, Miss Gordon! How?"

"All that makes life charming by the seaside will soon be gone. Where will be the quietude, the sweet repose that charms one at a quiet place by the sea? There was a time when no sound save the soft plash of the sea at rest would have been heard here. What do you hear now? A babel of voices, the donkey's bray, and, Merciful Powers! a barrel organ. We shall have the niggers below us directly."

"These things please the multitude," Malcolm said, "and nowadays everybody caters for the greater number. No man will waste his time and money to please the minority. Legislation points the same way."

"True," said Stapleton, thoughtfully, "perhaps it is for the best."

"I cannot think so," returned Malcolm, "when I look at the way the catering and legislation are carried out; the crowd has what it asks for in both cases, not what is best for it. The captains obey their crews and the ship goes upon an uncertain course."

"There is something in what you say," Stapleton said, "and I give you credit for having a wiser head than mine; but I cannot think as you do. The people may go a little astray in their increased liberty, but they will right themselves."

Malcolm was roused. He held strong views on the subject, and an animated discussion ensued.

While it was going on Isabel wrote a few words on the back of an envelope, and when her brother's face was turned away passed it to Stapleton.

He was a little surprised on getting a communication of that nature from a young lady he had not met half a dozen times in his life, but it was not of a very alarming or doubtful nature.

"My brother has great need of the society of such a friend as you. Will you, during your stay, come and see him again? We are staying at Acacia House."

That was all, and Stapleton, not a little ashamed of himself for a momentary suspicion, hastily scrawled at the bottom of it, "I will come every day," and passed it back just as Malcolm, whose attention had been drawn away by a squabble on the beach between two rival boatmen touting for hapless strangers who might be induced to have an hour's sail, resumed the discussion.

While the men talked the girls played with Cracker, who had an undying passion for fetching and carrying sticks and small stones—stones for choice, because they injured his teeth, just as men indulge in luxuries that are deleterious—and altogether it was a very satisfactory morning to all concerned.

Stapleton was five minutes late when he appeared before his wife, and was a little out of breath into the bargain.

Annie forthwith began to point out how much the fish had suffered, when he told her whom he had met and what had passed.

"You did not tell him who was here, I hope," Annie said.

"Not such a goose as that," he replied, "will you say anything about his being here?"

His wife only looked at him wondering. How could he think she could be so indiscreet? He apologised for the suggestion, and she laid out the order of proceeding while they stayed.

"You must go and see him," she said, "and now and then you can stop all day if you like. Don't let him come this way at any time, and the meeting we dread will not take place. They must not see each other on any account."

Neither of them knew that a meeting had already taken place, but the arrangement Annie made was, nevertheless, a wise one. It was better for Elfrida not to know that Malcolm was so near.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BROUGHT BACK.

Upon the deep waters—many a ship that rolls
Before the wind and waves in sately pride.
Uprooted seaweed, human forms and souls;
These are the things that o'er the ocean ride;
Yet though they find their watery paths on thee
They cannot rule thee—oh! thou tamerless sea.

It delighted Stapleton Caveall to be of service to anyone. He was ever anxious to make up for the years he had spent in unprofitable dissipation, and the task of rousing Malcolm from his apathy was very acceptable to him.

He had great faith in his wife, and never did anything out of business bearing upon the welfare of themselves or others without consulting her, and he did not act like many husbands who make a show of appealing to their wives and go their own way after all, but followed the advice she gave him.

Every morning he and Cracker set out for the other end of Shingleham, well pleased with their outing. Cracker had established himself firmly as a favourite with Isabel and Marian, who was charmed with his sagacity and delighted with the few tricks he performed, and he made his reputation for bravery when a rat was discovered by the landlady at Acacia Villa in the scullery, and Cracker was taken down to have him out.

The poor, skulking, burrowing brute had hidden in a sauceman, from which Cracker

skillfully dislodged him and with one nip ended his career.

From that time Cracker became a favourite with the landlady too, and she gave him choice morsels from her lodgers' dishes, so that he gathered flesh and would soon have been out of condition but for the active life he led out of doors.

It was not long before their morning strolls were noticed by Elfrida, who from the window of her breakfast-room saw Cracker and his master go by again and again at the same time. She asked Stapleton one evening what there was to lure him from their side of the town, and why he left his wife at home alone.

"There's an old friend, somebody I know," he said, "staying at the other end of the town. He's unwell and wants a little cheering, so I give him an hour or two every day."

"It is very kind of you," she said.

It was fortunate she was not looking at him, for his face was flushed when he gave the answer, and she was very quick at getting at the bottom of a mystery. A further embarrassment was in store for him created by Carlisle Harvard, who asked if he could be of any service, and volunteered to accompany him.

"Is it anybody I know?" said Jacob Brierly, "if so we could all go, or would not a little change here do him good?"

"Just at present I think he would be better without too much society," replied Stapleton, glancing in dismay at his wife; "the fact is he is very fond of solitude and only just tolerates me. It was his friends who urged me to call upon him as often as I could."

Miss Steelson saw the look he gave his wife and suspected there was more in these visits than appeared on the surface. A little later she got him quietly in a corner and questioned him.

"Will you think me impertinent if I ask who your friend is?" she said, "perhaps I may be able to assist you in lightening his suffering."

"I think I can trust you," Stapleton replied, "or I'll tell you what will be the best thing to do, come round in the morning and talk to Annie."

"Very well," Miss Steelson said, and in the morning she was told who it was that Stapleton went so regularly to see.

It troubled her sorely, for Carlisle Harvard had told her of the meeting in the cottage, and although Elfrida had said nothing of what had taken place there, she shrewdly guessed the nature of the interview.

"They must never meet again if it can be avoided," she said, "and one or the other ought to leave Shingleham."

"Mr. Gordon is going back to Easterley next week," Annie said, and Miss Steelson was relieved.

Stapleton had already gone forth on his usual errand and was not expected back until the afternoon, as he had accepted an invitation to luncheon. The day was very hot and there were masses of cloud in the horizon that looked more like distant mountains than piled-up masses of vapour.

Stapleton, when passing the pier, heard an old sailor warn the owner of a shrimping boat not to go out.

"It's gathering for a rush," he said, "and will be a stiff 'un when it comes."

"You anticipate a storm?" Stapleton said.

"I know we shall get one," replied the old man, "I haven't lived on this coast for nigh sixty years without knowing the signs of it. See how they are piled up, a mile thick maybe, and charged with lightning like great guns with powder. A light will be put to the touch-hole afore the day is out."

"Do you get great storms here?"

"Orfen and orfen, sir. Don't you see how many widders we have about here? more than half on 'em has husbands and sons under the sea."

Stapleton was interested, and having a few minutes to spare stayed to talk with his experienced informant. The old man, nothing loth, gave him an insight into the dangers of the coast.

"There's nothing to break a storm here," he said, "they come straight up from the German seas and breaks like raging lions on the coast, and for all the sea looking so pretty and so smooth there's more danger here than in many a rocky coast. You see them yellor streaks, sir, out in the offing?"

"Yes," replied Stapleton, "the sun's rays make them, I suppose."

"Sun's rays," replied the old man, with ill-concealed contempt for Stapleton's ignorance, "no, sir, there's the sands just upon dry at low water and dangerous to big craft at all times. That's why we have the lightship off there. The storm, I reckon, will break about the turn of the tide. Then let them as is outside give 'em a pretty wide berth. I've seen a big ship strike on 'em, sir, and go under in a quarter of an hour and never more than a spar or two ever come to light again."

"Quickands, eh?"

"Quick enough at swallowing all that comes near 'em, and shifting, treacherous sands too, closer in to-day and further out to-morrow, just as the waters take 'em. A dangerous place, sir, none more so round the coast."

Stapleton walked on, feeling uneasy without knowing why. The feeling upon him was more than the apprehension one usually entertains for the safety of the general public and more consonant with the fear one has for a friend in peril. But he had no friend at sea that he knew of, and, shaking off the temporary depression, he quickened his pace.

They were glad to see him at Acacia Villa, as they always were, but Malcolm was not inclined to go out.

"The morning is oppressive," he said, "and the heat almost intolerable. I think we had better remain at home."

So they lit their cigars and sat under the verandah, watching Isabel and Marian giving Cracker a feast of fetching and carrying with an india-rubber ball, and talking over the news of the day.

The papers had just arrived with their daily batch of miserable lives epitomised in the police reports, political and social news.

"Here's the weather report," said Malcolm, "with the prognostications of the Meteorological Society. Hum! great storm PROBABLE on this coast."

"I saw a resident who is certain of it," Stapleton remarked; "he chilled me with a description of this coast."

"It is dangerous."

"Highly so it appears. And yet I should not have thought it."

"Every winter there are harrowing stories of losses among the fishermen," Malcolm said; "a small asylum raised here is filled with orphans. If you look at the chart of the drowned on our coast you will find Shingleham very high in the list."

All their talk that morning was of drowning, of accidents on rivers and on seas, of shipwrecks and other disasters attending a life upon the deep.

At luncheon the girls joined in and added their little records to the lugubrious reminiscences, and the weather was in harmony with it all.

Clouds had obliterated the sun and the wind came up in fitful, angry gusts, bearing spray and sand up from below, so that they were compelled to close the windows. Dark patches were scudding across the sheet of grey above, and everything foreboded a stormy afternoon and night.

After luncheon Malcolm and Stapleton went out upon the cliffs. Both were restless and burdened with a presentiment of coming evil, but were somewhat reassured when they saw the sea was clear of all save a few coasters anchored inside the sands.

The great ships and steamers had all disappeared, having gone out to avoid the dangerous coast, and on the shore the fishermen were busy hauling up their fishing and pleasure boats so as to be out of the reach of the heavy waves fast gathering strength and rolling heavily over the distant sands.

The tide was out and on the turn. In another hour the waters would come rolling back with a resistless impetuosity and make it perilous for boats to be afloat.

Malcolm suggested to Stapleton that they should go down the steps cut in the cliff and give the fishermen a hand with their work.

"It is something to do," he said, "and I feel I cannot be idle."

Stapleton consented and they went down. On the sands he saw his acquaintance of the morning working with a will and urging his comrades to get everything as high as they could.

"We have had nothing like what is coming," he said, "no, not for years."

As he spoke a mighty gust came up and, catching some sails hung out to dry, lifted them in the air and pitched one of the largest over some screaming children.

A dozen ready hands released them and the little ones were bidden to go home.

"I am sorry to find you are right in your prophecy," Stapleton said to his marine acquaintance.

"Ay, ay," he said. "I'm not one of them as hollers without reason. When I say there's a storm at hand you get it."

"Can we help you?"

"If you'll bear a hand, gentlemen, with my Polly I'll thank you."

His Polly was a boat that had been left almost to the last. They laid hold of her and, with the assistance of those at the shore capstan, ran her up to the summit of a slope of shingle.

"She'll be safe there," Stapleton said.

He had to speak loudly, almost shouting, for the wind was now roaring, and the returning waters, with crowns of foam, were rolling fiercely in.

The old man was not so certain about the safety of his Polly.

"I've seen the waters break over that," he said, "and we shall be lucky if the boats ain't tossed about like shuttlecocks to-night."

"Why do you keep them here?" was a natural question from Malcolm.

"We brings 'em down for the summer round the cliff," the old man said; "they're handy here for people and the fish buyers. 'Tain't often as we gets a blow like this in the summer. Look at that!"

They followed the direction of his hand and saw a white wall rushing down from the sea upon the beach. It broke a hundred yards away and spread out into a great white sheet of bubbling foam.

"That's a promise o' something by-and-bye," he said.

The boats were all as far out of the reach of danger as they could be taken at the time, and the seamen retreated to the steps of the cliff and, filling their pipes, sat down to smoke.

Malcolm and Stapleton kept by the old salt, who borrowed a glass of a man near him and scanned the horizon closely.

As he swept it round to the east an exclamation escaped his lips and the eyes of those around were turned upon him.

"Anything coming?" one asked.

"A sail," he said, "and by her rig, as far as I can make out, I should say she's a yacht."

Some of the others looked and were of the same opinion.

Malcolm borrowed the glass, but could see nothing for awhile, but presently he saw a whitish patch against the dark and sullen sky.

"Why don't he keep off?" roared the old man.

"Does he think he can weather this coast with a gale dead on shore?" and in his excitement he waved his arms, forgetting that those on deck could not yet see him.

"Just like 'em," said the old man, in Malcolm's ear, "afraid of nothing. He's got no look-out higher than the jibboom, I'll bet."

All their interest was now concentrated on the advancing vessel, which in a little while was hull up and apparently making straight for the shore. There was no mistaking it then. It was one of those graceful vessels which modern civilisation has built for taking long pleasure trips in—big toys for amateur seamen.

It was only by roaring loudly now that the men could make themselves heard, and few words were exchanged. All were standing erect, their pipes forgotten, and anxious looks rested on every face. Every practised seaman set down the captain of that vessel as a madman.

The gallant little craft was soon well in sight, not more than two miles from the shore. Suddenly some of the canvas was taken in and she veered a little, as if trying to tack.

"He sees it now," roared the old sailor, "but it's too late. Who volunteers for the life-boat? It will be wanted."

There was a rush towards the small building where the boat lay at the end of the cliff, Malcolm and Stapleton arriving among the foremost of the throng, but already others from the town were there and the doors were surrounded by men eager to volunteer.

The captain of the lifeboat, a sturdy fisherman with the frame of a giant and the eye of a hawk, stood on a bench, and by a bend of his finger singled out the men he wanted.

Malcolm and Stapleton were thanked with a touch of the hat, but their services declined.

Then the boat, with its splendid appliances for the saving of life, was run out.

Disappointed, our two friends turned away and once more looked out to sea.

The yacht was still safe, but labouring in vain to keep off the cruel sands—wind and tide were slowly forcing her in.

By this time the news of a coming wreck had passed through the town and all who could leave their homes came hurrying down to the beach, forming a deep, dark line upon the shingle.

There were wails of women in the air, but the roaring of the winds drowned them. There were eyes filled with tears, but every face was covered with the salt spray and the tears mingled with it. Every face was turned towards the doomed vessel.

Hope there was none, save to rescue a few of those who must soon be fighting for dear life among the turbid waters. So they ran the lifeboat down upon its wheeled carriage, the men leaping in as it plunged into the surf.

A moment later the oars were out, and it was riding over the waves.

"She's struck."

It was heard above the storm, for a thousand voices spake at once. The yacht had pitched upon the sands and heeled over.

For a few moments they saw her masts, and then they seemed to sink into the sea and the yacht was gone.

Not a vestige of her could be seen.

The shore then presented a scene of surpassing excitement. Women sat down with clasped hands and bared heads or ran off shrieking, while the men hurried purposely to and fro, and hoarse shouts and cries mingled with the storm. But soon the crowd was still again.

A man was pointing out to sea, and in a minute every eye was turned in the direction of the outstretched arm. Only the keenest eye could see what it was, for to ordinary vision it was only a black speck upon the water.

But some knew it was the head of a man who was fighting gallantly for his life, rising over wave after wave, and making for the shore. He was coming away from both yacht and lifeboat, and those on board the latter had not seen him.

The course he took and that of the lifeboat was like two lines of a triangle, with the yacht for a diverging point, one coming away, the other going towards it. Both were moving swiftly—the one by sturdy arms and the other by his lone efforts and the force of the sea.

A rush was made for the point where he would land, and some men of forethought borrowed lines from the boatmen, knowing he would need help if he got near the shore. They knew the dreadful power of the undertow of receding waves, and the little chance there was for him to reach the land unaided.

Malcolm and Stapleton were then in front, and saw his white face, with fixed eyes, approaching. He was still swimming strongly, when he came in on the crest of the last wave, and was pitched upon the shore.

They rushed upon him, but the dreaded undertow licked him up as if he were a straw and carried him back again. Once more he was battling with the waters, and they saw his arms tossed, either inviting aid or in despair. Once more he came in high above them, and the sea furiously dashed him down.

Regardless of the risk he ran, Malcolm sprang upon him and held him fast; a skilful hand cast a line; he seized it, and bearing his burden, he was dragged out of the reach of danger.

The shout that hailed him was not heard, for all his thoughts were fixed upon the quiet form that lay beside him. It was that of a handsome man, in the spring of life, and both face and form were still.

Close by stood Stapleton with wild eyes fixed upon the dead man, who, when he had last seen him in life, was among the most envied of men, rich and great, and the husband of a woman whose beauty had held a hundred worshippers in chains.

It was the Duke of Brabazon—the husband of Elfrida.

(To be Continued.)

OUR COLUMNS FOR THE CURIOUS.

MARK TWAIN.—Mark Twain says the only introduction to a literary audience that he ever had that seemed to him the right word in the right place, a real inspiration, was as follows: "Ladies and Gentlemen, I shall not waste any unnecessary time in the introduction. I don't know anything about this man—at least, I only know two things about him—one is that he has never been in the Penitentiary, and the other is I can't see why he hasn't."

A BARBER'S WIT.—An eccentric barber opened a shop under the walls of the King's Bench Prison. The windows being broken when he entered it, he mended them with paper, on which appeared "Shave for a penny," with the usual invitation to customers, and over the door were scrawled these lines: "Here lives Jimmy Wright. Shaves as well as any man in England—almost—not quite." Foote, the great actor (who loved everything eccentric), saw those inscriptions, and, hoping to extract some fun from the author, whom he justly concluded to be an odd character, he pulled off his hat, and thrusting his head through a paper pane into the shop, called out, "Is Jimmy Wright at home?" The barber immediately forced his own head through another pane into the street and replied, "No, sir; he has just popped out." Foote laughed heartily and gave the man a guinea.

STRANGE CLERICAL COURTSHIP.—The Rev. Jeremiah White, domestic chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, had the ambition to aspire to the hand of the Lady Frances, Cromwell's youngest daughter. The Protector was informed of it, and having no inclination for such an alliance, was so much concerned that he ordered the person who told him to keep a strict look-out, promising if he could give him any substantial proofs he should be well rewarded, and White severely punished. The spy followed his business so closely that in a little time he dogged Jerry White (as he was generally called) to the lady's chamber, and ran immediately to acquaint the Protector. Oliver, in a rage, hastened to the chamber, and, going quickly in, found Jerry on his knees, kissing his daughter's hand. Cromwell, in a fury, asked what it meant. White, with a great deal of presence of mind, said, "May it please your highness, I have a long time courted that young gentleman there, my lady's woman, and cannot prevail. I was, therefore, humbly praying her ladyship to intercede for me." Oliver, turning to the girl, cried, "What's the meaning of this, hussey? Why do you refuse the honour Mr. White would do you? He is my friend and I expect you would treat him as such." My lady's woman, who de-

sired nothing better, with a very low courtesy, replied, "If Mr. White intends me that honour, I shall not be against him." "Sayest thou so, my lass?" cried Cromwell. "Call Goodwyn (one of the preachers), this business shall be done presently, before I go out of the room." The Rev. Jerry had gone too far to recede from his proposal; his brother parson came, and Jerry and my lady's woman were married in the presence of the Protector, who gave the bride five hundred pounds as portion, to the secret disappointment and indignation of the enraged dupe of his own making, but to the entire satisfaction of the fair abigail, who obtained a husband much above her most sanguine hope or pretensions. After the Restoration White remained quiescent. He died in 1707, aged 78. When the story of his marriage was mentioned before Mrs. White (who survived her husband) she always simpered her assent to its truth.

LADIES' PATCHES.—The beauties of the court of Louis the Fifteenth thought they had made a notable discovery when they gummed pieces of black taffeta on their cheeks to heighten the brilliancy of their complexions. . . The ladies in England had before adopted patches, in quaint shapes, as of a crescent or coach and horses, etc. An epigram was written:

Her patches are of every cut
For pimples and for scars;
Here's all the wandering planets' signs,
And some of the fixed stars!

The coach and horses patch was an especial favourite. Anstey, in his satire "The Bath Guide," enumerates "velvet patches" as among a fine lady's necessities; but about the beginning of the present century they seemed gradually to fall out of fashion in England.

TRANCE OF AN INDIAN FAKIR.—The most remarkable case of resuscitation on record is thus recorded in "Notes and Queries," by Dr. Falconer, from an account furnished to him by an eye-witness, Sir Claude M. Wade, C.B., formerly political agent at the court of Runjeet Singh. It describes the resuscitation of a Fakir who had been buried alive, as follows; and we believe the case was referred to in the discussion about Dr. Tanner's fast: For some time previous to interment the Fakir sustained himself on rice only, subsequently exchanged for rice water; after having been thus dieted he rolled up a piece of cotton in the form of a small ball, which he swallowed; afterwards he took milk, all which, it is said, passed in an unchanged condition. This appeared to be the test of his being in a fit state to undergo interment. The natural apertures of the body, with the exception of the mouth, were stopped with wax. The Fakir then squatted down, opened his mouth and with his fingers turned the point of his tongue backwards and closed the mouth. Almost immediately after this he seemed to fall into a state of collapse. He was then placed in a bag, put into a box in the position he had assumed, and let down in a cell and buried. After he had been buried for six weeks the cell was opened in the presence of Runjeet Singh and Sir C. M. Wade. The Fakir was removed from the box and the bag opened by Dr. Macgregor, who was also present; no beating of the heart could be detected, nor pulsation at the wrists. The general appearance of the body was corpse-like; the face was swollen and the head, which reclined on one side, was warm to the touch. Resuscitation was commenced by pouring warm water on the head, and the successive application also to the head of three or four fresh half-baked wheaten cakes. The wax was removed from the nostrils, its removal being followed by a convulsive movement of the whole body; the wax from the other apertures was then removed, next the mouth was opened with some little force, the jaws being clenched, and the tongue drawn forward; some difficulty, however, was at first experienced in retaining the tongue in its natural position. The eyelids were separated, moved up and down and rubbed; general friction completed the means of resuscitation. In the course of thirty or forty minutes the Fakir recovered, and his first remark, made to Runjeet Singh in the language of his country, was "You believe me now?" On being asked whether he

retained any consciousness during interment, he replied that he had been in a dreamy state. Some three or four months after this occurrence he died, but his death was not attributed to his previous protracted interment. Readers who may be curious on this subject will find some valuable remarks in Dr. Carpenter on Human Physiology.

OLD HUNGERFORD REVELS.—William Hone, the genial collector, gives an interesting account of certain rustic sports annually occurring at Hungerford, and described by a spectator in 1820. Among the odd diversions mentioned is hunting a pig with a soaped tail. Grunter with his tail well soaped is set off at the foot of a hill, and is quickly pursued; but the person who can lay any claim to him must first catch him by the tail and fairly detain him with one hand. This is an almost impossible feat, for the pig, finding himself pulled back, tries to run forward, and the tail, of course, slips from the grasp of the holder. It is pretty well known that such is the obstinate nature of a pig that on being pulled one way he will strive all he can to go contrary. In illustration of this circumstance I may mention a curious wager a few years ago between a pork butcher and a waterman. The butcher bet the waterman that he would make a pig run over one of the bridges quicker than the waterman would row across the river. The auditors thought it impossible; the bet was eagerly accepted, and the next day was appointed for the performance. When the signal for starting was given the waterman began to row with all his might and main, and the butcher, catching hold of the tail of the pig, endeavoured to pull him back, upon which the pig pulled forward, and with great rapidity ran over the bridge, pulling the butcher after him, who arrived on the opposite side before his opponent. Cannon, once famous as a pugilist, was a native of Wiltshire, and visited the Hungerford revel. There was a man there celebrated over the country for boxing; it was said that with a blow from his fist he could break the jawbone of an ox; upon the whole he was a desperate fellow, and no one dared challenge him to fight. Cannon challenged him to jump in sacks for a cheese. It was agreed that they should jump three times the distance of about five hundred yards. The first time Cannon fell, and accordingly his opponent won; the second time Cannon's opponent fell, and the third time they kept a pretty even pace for about four hundred yards, when they bounced against each other and both fell, so that there was a dispute who had won. Cannon's opponent was for dividing the cheese, but he would not submit to that, and proposed jumping again; the man would not, but got out of the sack, and during the time that Cannon was consulting some friends on the course to be pursued, ran off with the cheese. Cannon, however, pursued and at last succeeded in finding him. He then challenged him to fight; the battle lasted two hours, and Cannon was victor. This circumstance introduced him to the "sporting world."

BARBERS' POLES.—Sometimes the usual sign used by barbers is not the striped pole, but one or more brass discs or dishes, suspended over the street. The origin of the use of these different signs is not perhaps generally known. Until the time of Louis XIV., in France, and of George II., in England, the offices of barber and surgeon were united. The sign then used was the streaked pole, with the basin suspended from it. The former was to represent a bandaged wound, and the latter the basin into which the blood flowed. The barbers, after their separation from the surgical profession, appropriated the sign, apparently without appreciating the joke they were playing upon themselves.

It is stated that the project for the erection of the new Opera House upon the Victoria Embankment has been finally abandoned.

The Liverpool Conservatives have decided to build a club-house of commodious dimensions, at an estimated cost of £28,000.

ZILLAH THE GIPSY;

OR,

LOVE'S CAPTIVE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Lady Violet's Victims," "Lord Jasper's Secret," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XVII.

WORTH TRYING FOR.

Oh, that estates, degrees and offices
Were not derived corruptly; and that clear honour
Were purchased by the merit of the wearer.

The gipsies had travelled rapidly from place to place since the tragedy which had befallen their leader.

There was some talk of extirpating them altogether, of hunting them down like wolves and erasing their existence from the face of the earth. Their tribe was in fact broken up by degrees, so that but fragments remained.

Some of the more daring spirits joined the brigands who haunted the mountains, others wandered in small groups from place to place, taking refuge in English forests or else going farther South.

Thyra and Michael remained together and were at present discussing the fearfully sudden deaths of Prince Anatole and Black David. They were both restless and vigilant, having been indirectly implicated in the former's death, but Thyra's defiant spirit never quailed. Crafty by nature, wholly remorseless where her passions were concerned, she had resolved to strike another blow in the enemy's quarter and assert Michael's claim to the prince's inheritance as his son.

She could prove that she and the prince had lived together at the English cottage, she passing among the simple village folk as the wife of the supposed artist, "Bardo," in reality Prince Anatole in disguise.

She could swear to a private marriage both in the gipsies' tent and in the cottage parlour when the prince was in a dying state and wished to atone for the treachery that had made him lure her away in the first instance.

She could even produce a marriage certificate, apparently signed, sealed and delivered, with all orthodox correctness, for who would prove it was a forgery since the only one who could confute its testimony, Prince Anatole, was dead?

Lady Alesia and all that hateful brood had had everything their own way too long. She knew that Zillah was the only rightful heiress in existence, but the girl had vanished and disposed of herself as she thought best. Why not let Michael try for possession?

And now through the night's hush the wind rose wild and strong, an autumn's tempest, and these two sat by the embers of a slowly-dying fire beneath an old broken wall, crusted with lichen and moss and damp with the dews of ivy and weeds.

A little distance off a dark and sullen river rolled in eddying wavelets lashed by the storm, and beyond were leagues of desolate moorland.

"They say he died without a groan," said Michael, looking gloomily towards the river and watching Thyra's lean hands, which suggested the idea of their being like the talons of a bird of prey.

They would surely destroy what they attacked and coveted.

"Black David knew where to strike," she answered, and no change passed over her rigid face as she clasped her son's hand.

Michael shivered and took a draught from his flask.

Whata night it was! The rain drove in fierce torrents against the blackened mountain's peaks, the shrieks of night birds mingling with the hurricane.

"A night to make a man value a home," said the gipsy, eyeing Thyra under his dark brows.

He was strangely like that dead man, she thought, with the same restless, glittering eyes and clear-cut profile.

"And strike for one," said Thyra, under her breath.

"Yes, if the plan is sound."

He loosened the kerchief about his chest and breathed quicker.

"You say I am that villain's son?"

"I do."

"And you have all in readiness to prove that he married you?"

She took from under her cloak an old, discoloured parchment deed and held it up.

It was the forged certificate of her marriage with the prince.

"The rogue was Red Reuben, a sometime lawyer's clerk; the police were after him for forgery for years, but he escaped to us."

Michael rose, shook his heavy limbs and lighted his pipe.

The scheme pleased him mightily, pleased his lawless instincts and love of greed.

"And now what of Zillah?" he asked, desiring to pierce that mystery. "You never would, perhaps you never could tell me the truth about her. Who is she?"

But Thyra, busy with morbid recollections and wild speculations of the future, shook her head.

Time enough when all was lost for enlightening him on that point.

Lady Alesia would, of course, dispute his succession inch by inch, but Thyra held the threat over her of exposing her own wickedness should she refuse to come to terms.

Michael would be content to share the property and leave half for the supposed heiress, the Lady Ida, and this was what Lady Alesia, fighting for position, would probably agree to in the end.

And thus must they work together to make all secure.

"A beggar's brat brought to amuse the prince's child from the Union," she said, then slowly, "You do not love her still, do you?"

He laughed with the savage cynicism of the ignorant.

"Why, no, mother, seeing there is a chance of my finding peace and plenty and a palace. If a man feels that he can play the Sultan and have a pick of beauties why care for a half-wild girl like Zillah?"

"Ah! Michael, I see a great future before you—wealth such as you desire and shall have."

"You make too sure of things," he said, moodily. "I do not think we shall find it easy to hoodwink justice and cheat the law."

"I have a very good card to play of which you guess nothing," Thyra muttered, recollecting Lady Alesia, with whom she had to deal.

It was not a crime to be carried into the quarters of an enemy who dared defy them and with right and justice on their side, it was a crime brought to the door of an impostor, to whom exposure meant ruin; but this Michael did not as yet know.

"Leave all to me—dispute and doubt nothing. I know the people we have to deal with. You will get half the apple if not all, and the bite may well content you. You will get it too without any trial or scene of any kind. I shall pull the strings and they will dance as we like."

He sometimes doubted his mother's sanity, but her voice was calm and steady, and he seldom found her wrong in her calculations or defeated in her resolves.

For hers was the nature of a serpent that will crawl in the dust with slavish affection, but spurned and betrayed will lift its hooded head and deal destruction broadcast.

Thyra had made herself fully acquainted with all the later proceedings of Lady Alesia and Madeline.

She knew of the marriage of the latter with the Duke of Clydale, and that it was reported he had married the girl to redeem his fallen fortunes, she had waited for the prince's death and Madeline's marriage ere showing her hand, for they were more than ever now in her power—she who could hurl Madeline from rank and

wealth to an abyss of shame, poverty, and despair should they utterly refuse to come to terms with her on the morrow.

Enjoying the comfortable warmth of the library fire at her villa near Clydale Castle, where she had returned after Madeline's marriage, Lady Alesia did not dream of danger.

She had won all for Madeline by a mischievous coup-d'état, how was she to imagine that the gipsy who had suborned Zillah and duped her with lies should at last arise as an enemy?

Lady Alesia was reading over Madeline's last letter, written at Carlsbad, where she and the duke were staying, when she was aroused from her pleasant reveries by hearing that a woman wished to see her and would not be denied.

A woman! what woman?

Lady Alesia had been about to sit down to a dainty little luncheon of oysters and Chablis when Adrienne brought her this intelligence.

"Tell her that I am out," she said, irritably.

"I did, miladi, but it was no use, she said she would wait."

"What sort of creature is she? A begging impostor, I suppose, with a card in her hand full of a list of subscribers."

"She looks like a gipsy," said Adrienne, eyeing her mistress intently.

The sneer died off her lip, she gripped the table and turned pale.

Could it be Zillah about to dispute her rights, to claim her dues?

"Tell her I will come to her," said Lady Alesia, recovering her self-control. "or, no, I will seek her myself."

Adrienne was now quite sure there was a family secret hidden somewhere, and one which it might considerably enrich her were she to gain a clue to its mystery. She saw her mistress seize her garden hat and cloak and open the back-door to address a gipsy woman so unused to civilisation as to be positively seated on the damp steps.

"Ah! it is you," cried Lady Alesia, relieved as the dark, swarthy face was upturned to her. It was not Zillah, and who but Zillah could harm them?

"Yes, I," said Thyra, springing to her feet.

"Hush! speak low. I will hear what you have to say yonder," muttered her ladyship, with a half-conciliatory smile, pointing to the distant lawns. Bribery might be needed, and the cold, stern face of the gipsy gave her secret consternation.

Lady Alesia was glad to hide herself and companion in the shrubberies, and after walking on rapidly a few hundred yards Thyra said, abruptly:

"Then you know me?"

"Know you, of course. You are the gipsy Thyra whom I have often driven away from Rosendale."

She paused, expecting some reply, but Thyra was silent.

"Why have you sought me?" continued Lady Alesia, affably.

"To tell you that you have woven a tangled net—a net in which you and your daughter will be surely entrapped unless you do us justice?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, this," said Thyra, with a fierce, defiant air. "I am that dead man's wife."

Lady Alesia started, paused, and then burst into a silvery peal of laughter—laughter that caught the ear of Mdlle. Adrienne, who had also come out to "take the air."

"You?" echoed her ladyship, shaking her perfumed laces, and laughed again.

Thyra made an impatient gesture.

"Why, he was proud as Lucifer and hard as a stone. He never committed an indiscretion in his life, never cared for a human being, and as for such egregious folly, he was never quite mad to the best of my belief."

Thyra drew the forged document—the false certificate—from her breast.

"Here is the proof."

"Is it?" said Lady Alesia, mockingly lifting her glass. "How interesting! It must be proved in a court of law to be worth anything. That is no proof. Besides, what is all this nonsense to me?"

Thyra's eyes had a panther-like glitter that did not escape the other's notice.

"I have a son," she said, quietly, "heir to his father's lands."

And now for the first time Lady Alesia saw her danger and the pit that had been dug for her destruction. Her intellect grasped the situation. Her face darkened, but she weighed every fact of the case with wonderful clearness. Nemesis had overtaken her.

It was not Zillah that these artful wretches sought to overturn and ruin, it was Madeline, the impostor, and she dared not challenge them to any open combat.

Lady Alesia was equal to the occasion; she gathered her thoughts together, measuring her adversaries' strength and the security of their position. Thyra was not quite an ignorant woman. She had once been beautiful, she had led the life of a strolling player, had been an artist's and sculptor's model, and as such had taken the prince's fancy. She knew enough of his life to believe that Thyra might have been his victim, but wife—never.

Lady Alesia descended off her high horse with courteous grace. To baffle Thyra she would have to bribe her. They must come to terms.

"When did the prince marry you?" she asked, merely to gain time and consider what was best to be done.

"Before he married his Arabian wife, Selika," said Thyra, her voice sharpening with anxiety.

Lady Alesia's coolness half checked her.

"Where is Zillah?" asked Lady Alesia, her face darkening still more.

Thyra wheeled round and saw mocking eyes full of malice and fire.

"She has fled."

"She has been with you and your tribe all along. Threaten me with any more of this absurd tale and I will defeat your schemes by owning the truth and seeking Zillah. Where would you and your son be then?"

"Is it worth while?" asked Thyra, craftily.

"We don't ask for our rights, but common justice—money for my son Michael, a decent sum for his wants—and you are free to take the rest and keep it."

"Why did you lure Zillah away?" Lady Alesia asked, after a long pause, and now her voice was steady, there was comparatively little to fear.

"For revenge," muttered Thyra, gloomily, off her guard.

"And yet he married you. That was a bad return, was it not? and why has your son not struck for his rights before, but waited till after the prince's death?"

There was an awful, sombre hatred in the gipsy's dark eyes now, and Lady Alesia dropped her mocking vein.

"You'd better come to terms," said Thyra, touching her arm.

"You must give us time, and you have not yet named your price."

"We want ten thousand pounds," said Thyra, panting with anxiety. "Little enough for a man to ask who could claim all."

"Where are you staying?" asked Lady Alesia, taking out a small memorandum book in which she entered a list of her fashionable friends and engagements.

"In the village for the present, but we never stay long in one place."

Then she gave her ladyship the address, and Lady Alesia promised to call in a few days and make some arrangement with regard to the demanded sum.

It was not pleasant to be thus linked in with a miserable crew, or to be at their mercy—people from whom robbery with violence might be naturally expected.

But their interests were now involved in hers, and thieves were as safe to depend on in such circumstances as friends.

"I will come to you," said Lady Alesia, on parting. "Do not seek me here. Of course you will understand that certificate must be handed to us and a paper drawn up and signed by you, declaring that you and your son have no further claim on the property."

"When we get the money, yes," assented

Thyra. "One shall be exchanged for the other."

"Of course, and now you had better go quietly away."

After the gipsy disappeared Lady Alesia returned to her oysters and Chablis with a scarcely discomposured air.

She and the gipsies were now engaged in a common cause—that of keeping Zillah from her rights.

That this girl might be starving, wandering about the world like a discredited queen, gave her no pang.

There would be some delay, but no difficulty in raising the required sum.

After her lunch she went to her bed-room and opening a large trunk knelt down before it and drew out the portrait of Selika, the prince's Arabian wife, Zillah's mother.

She gazed at it for a few minutes with coldly critical interest, and next she touched a packet of the dead woman's letters that the prince must have cherished, for they were found carefully tied with ribbon in his cinque-cento bureau.

Next she opened the little shabby school-desk that the misguided child had left in her room the morning she sealed her own fate and fled to the gipsies, and taking out Zillah's note read it carefully through.

Her face must have betrayed some emotion, for her hands shook on the edges of the paper. She started, seeing Adrienne lifting the velvet curtain.

"The gipsy, my dear, has returned, and wishes to speak once more to you."

Little dreaming her actions and words were suspected and watched, Lady Alesia slipped the desk in an open drawer, and hastily turning the key, descended below.

"I ordered you not to come here again," she said, a little sharply, seeing Thyra on the steps. "Could you not give us some money to go on with?" asked Thyra, holding out her hand.

Lady Alesia opened her purse and poured several sovereigns in the sunburnt palm.

"The first instalment," muttered Lady Alesia, returning to her room and opening the drawer. The desk had gone!

CHAPTER XVIII.

A NEW DANGER.

The mind that broods o'er guilty woes
Is like the scorpion girt with fire.

THE Duke of Clydale and his young wife returned to the Castle in the early spring, and the dowager duchess was very gracious to her young daughter-in-law.

Clydale was saved, many difficulties removed and the future pointed to happiness and prosperity.

Lady Ida's health was somewhat delicate and the bleak winds of March had given her a tiresome cough, but with care they believed she would suffer no ultimate harm.

The Castle was crowded with guests, among whom were the Ladies Delamere and their mother, a sprinkling of artists, diplomats and literary people, several friends of the dowager duchess, and last, but not least, Lady Alesia.

It was the first day of her arrival, and she heard that the young duchess was somewhat indisposed.

Then, as bright, girlish laughter rang in her ears, she checked her thoughtful mood and wore her usual "society" air of smiling indifference.

Lady Rose and her sister were delighted to meet their old friend at the Castle, and after a considerable amount of embracing had been got through Lady Alesia saw the duke approaching through the conservatory and rose to welcome him.

"So delighted to have you back again in England," she said, with unusual warmth. "I have missed you dreadfully, but what is wrong with dear Ida?"

"Merely fatigue—a slight cold, I fancy. We were out yesterday, driving, and Ida took a

chill. Then a dinner-party in the evening completely knocked her up."

Hespoke rather too coolly, with too business-like a manner for Lady Alesia to believe his wife's indisposition was a matter of deep concern to him.

Lady Alesia was very anxious to see her daughter. Her nerves had been a good deal tried of late. She was therefore considerably relieved when Madeline's maid came to tell her that the duchess would like to see her at once.

As she ascended the splendid staircase a thrill of pride swept through her to reflect that all this should be Madeline's. She was a daring and unscrupulous woman, but nothing had ever seemed so terrible to face in this world as the deadly humiliation of poverty. She never allowed anything to trouble her long, but she had not quite settled with her enemies, and there would be a painful revelation to make to Madeline.

The duchess was lying languidly on a couch, in her boudoir, as usual, sipping tea. She wore a superb rose de chambre of embroidered silk—her bright, rippling hair falling over her shoulders, her face slightly flushed, from a recent slumber.

"My dearest girl, you are not ill, I hope," Lady Alesia said, as Madeline kissed her. "Why, I declare, your forehead is burning. Whatever is the matter?"

The duchess, however, was replying. It was quite evident to her mother's keen scrutiny that she had suffered a painful shock.

"Someone suspects us," muttered Madeline, deadly pale. "Wasn't it hard, too, when I could be so happy—every wish gratified, and Bertrand's love?"

"What do you mean?" Lady Alesia asked, paralyzed for the moment how to act or what to say. Had the gipsies waylaid Madeline and threatened her? Hardly likely, seeing that she was about to settle amicably with them.

Madeline's eyes dilated. She breathed heavily.

"I have seen Zillah," she muttered. "It was abroad, and she recognised me. It was but an instant's flash of recognition. But her look, ah!—never shall I forget it. Then again this morning, as I was dressing, a letter reached me—an anonymous letter—warning me that the real heiress might yet be found."

Lady Alesia drew this unpleasant document from her daughter's hands.

"We can trace it to one source," she said, quickly, "the gipsies. Since last seeing you I have been treated to a remarkable interview with one of them, a woman called Thyra, and no doubt they think to gain more by threats."

But no, this communication was certainly not from any of them. It perplexed Lady Alesia, and then quick as lightning came the remembrance of the missing desk. The person who had written the anonymous letter might hold the clue to the crime and mystery of their lives.

Some one of her household had stolen the desk, no doubt thinking it contained money and jewellery. She had dismissed the girl whom she suspected from her employ—an unfortunate parlour-maid whom Lady Alesia had accepted with rather a doubtful character, and the suspicion of a "Penitentiary" about her. And yet what could this poor girl make of Zillah's note? No one, unless they were armed with knowledge of what had gone before, could make use of the information there suggested.

"What did the gipsies want?" asked the duchess, in a low voice.

"They want to pretend the prince married one of their tribe, a woman called Thyra, years ago, and that her son is the legal inheritor of all."

"It is awful," said the duchess, under her breath, "it is like living under the weight of a perpetual nightmare."

"No marriage of course ever took place, the whole thing is false, they can only threaten us with exposure because they know that Zillah, the lawful heiress, is alive and that our position is rotten at the core; but in the event of Zillah claiming her right, it may suit us to side with

them and accept the son Michael as the heir, because we shall thus gain more."

"It is a fatally complicated business," said Madeline, with sudden violence.

"What I do not understand is this danger in a new quarter; some one unknown to us is possessed of knowledge, and maybe will have to be bought off too. There is a person living who threatens to denounce you as an impostor to the world from this letter you have just shown me. They have clearly got scent of the truth and think there's money to be made out of it."

No more was said at that moment, through the entrance of the duchess's maid.

She gave both quick and searching glances, and perhaps neither of the ladies would have been so cool and self-possessed under her scrutiny had they been aware of the capacity in which she had frequently been employed.

Who were pulling these unseen strings? Who was setting justice on the track? Who had unshakeable faith in the cumulative weight of circumstantial evidence?

Some invisible foe in the background was playing a deeper game than even Lady Alesia, that skilled diplomat, could have done.

It was like a game of chess in which the queen had been checkmated in three moves, till a wily player came to show his skill, a player who had sprung from that race in whose veins runs the subtlety which is a proverb.

"Will your grace dress for dinner?" asked the maid, lingering.

She evidently made mental notes of their looks and gestures. She saw the duchess lock the letter in her dressing-table drawer.

"Why am I so ill?" said Madeline, lifting her hand to her brow.

She felt like a gambler who has nearly played his last throw.

White and worried, she drew off the portrait-rings the prince had given her months ago on the evening he arrived at the villa.

"A present from your dear father," said Lady Alesia, tenderly.

The quiet woman in black—the lady's maid—saw the duchess's hand tremble as she laid the costly gift in her jewel-case.

The door of the boudoir opened and the duke entered, bringing a magnificent cluster of flowers from the conservatory.

"You will be able to join us at dinner, Ida," he said, kindly. "I never saw you so weak and shaken as this in all our rapid travelling abroad. Don't you remember how you told me that day on the Swiss mountains that you felt the strength and vigour of a mountaineer, equal to ascending the Matterhorn?"

Madeline remembered. She had no thought then of England, of her false position, or her terrible fears.

"She was always delicate," said Lady Alesia, shaking her head, "like her poor mother, Selika, the cold winds used to try her dreadfully."

Again the woman in black glanced at the duchess and again came the pitiful, nervous tremour.

She seemed transformed almost by some hideous miracle into a helpless invalid.

She loved her husband. Ah! how she loved him. His mere presence near her, the touch of his hand, the caress in his smile were dearer to her than life. And he had not forgotten someone whom he had once deeply cared for.

Madeline was sure of this. There was a discordant note in his being, he would sit thoughtfully for hours in reveries, scarcely conscious that she, his wife, was near him, then, startled into self-recollection, sigh, and suddenly leave her side.

She hoped that all the fascinations of modern society and all the aid and comfort her wealth brought would wean him from sadness. He would speak too in that semi-morbid yet cynical tone as of one ill at ease; and even now, bringing her these flowers, she was sure he had done so more out of a recollection of his duty to her than from love.

Madeline was jealous of his every thought, jealous of the women he spoke to when she was not with him, jealous of every memory of his past in which she could not share.



[A SECRET INTERVIEW.]

She made a great effort to steady her voice to calmness and conquer weakness.

"I shall be quite well enough to come down to dinner, dear Bertram, this evening; this nice tea has so refreshed me and aunt's coming has also cheered me, we've had so much to talk over."

This time the quiet woman in black pronounced her mistress a fine actress, and who so good a judge as she?

Madeline, alone with her maid and dressing for dinner, was off her guard; she glanced too long at that locked drawer, and she felt torn with conflicting emotions, a strange dread shone in her dark eyes. And thus are the advances of terror like a fatal poison circulating through the blood—cruel as the slow drops of water on a criminal's head.

When the duchess, dressed à ravir in a turquoise blue dress of satin and plush embroidered with white forget-me-nots, a parure of pearls about her throat and arms, entered the drawing-room of the Castle she found all her guests chatting merrily and delighted to see her again amongst them.

The Ladies Delamere were deep in flirtation with their two lovers—friends of the duke who had been assiduous in their attentions at balls and billiards at Queen's Gate.

One of the musical geniuses was at the grand piano playing a maddening waltz of his own composition, and as he invariably broke the middle notes of the finest trichord instruments made, slashed and hammered away amid deafening applause. For are not strength of fingers and wrists and biceps more desirable than any inner poetic sweetness of fancy? He evidently thought so and sent away most of his hearers, who believed in noise and nothing else, enraptured.

"What a hand that fellow would be at billiards, I should say," whispered Sir Guy to Lady Rose.

"Makes a tremendous row for such a little chick, doesn't he? Ah! there goes another note."

The "little chick's" fervid, wandering eyes

worked very creditably, so also did his fingers and feet—his morceau was now describing the overflowing of a tide and the crash of village homes amid the floods. Some thought it a brilliant fantasia on the "Earthquake of Lisbon."

Lady Alesia and the dowager duchess were warm friends and had plenty to say.

Dinner was shortly served and all went merry as a marriage bell.

Who could guess the dread that reigned in Madeline's breast—Madeline in her exquisite toilette and matchless pearls—or the horrible, icy fear that if realised would take from her wealth, beauty and reason? She knew that madness would be a mercy were she to be revealed to the world in her true colours.

After the dinner had ended Lady Alesia, who was now staying on a visit at the Castle, went somewhat hastily to her room and opening the window gazed out on to the terrace gardens and park.

It was a moonless night and only the tops of the branches waving against her window were distinguishable, with now and then a break in the sky. A slight shower was falling, yet nevertheless her ladyship was either compelled or determined to go out.

She waited till strains of music issued from the drawing-room, and the gentlemen had joined the ladies, save two or three restless spirits who preferred cigars and billiards. She could not rest that night without seeing Thyra.

Lady Alesia had not far to go ere meeting the object whom she sought, and close behind her was the dark figure of Michael.

He was leaning sullenly against one of the gnarled trunks of the leafless oak trees of the park, kicking a stone with his foot. It was also evident he had been drinking deeply, for his voice when he spoke was thick and almost inarticulate and his eyes were fierce and blood-shot. In his present state he was a dangerous man and one to be feared.

"I tell you it isn't enough, my lady," he said, with an oath, after Lady Alesia had spoken to Thyra. "I mean to have more," he went on,

brutally menacing and vindictive, "or I'll—I'll have none."

"Never mind him," said Thyra, quietly, "he's got one of his drinking fits on him to-night."

"I tell you I love her, always did," he cried, staggering backward, "Zillah, you see, she promised to be my wife. She was but a girl then and didn't know her own mind, but when he came and gave her gold and turned her head she hated me, a 'rough fellow like you,' she said, and broke the toy I gave her before my face."

"Horrible!" cried Lady Alesia, covering her eyes with her hand, "this man will ruin all."

"You may well say horrible indeed, my lady, but as sure as that's the sky above us I'll kill her one day for her cruelty to me. Is a man to lose his peace of mind, to have his life blasted for a woman, and not be revenged?"

It was a question many men have asked before him, men who have been lost in this world and the next through a woman.

Lady Alesia was sure that Michael was likely as not to blurt out the truth some day or other when drink stole away his reason. Just as she was whispering her fears to Thyra and preparing to leave she started and uttered a cry. She was quite sure someone or something rustled over the grass, passed rapidly by and vanished amid the shadowy upland.

"What's that?" cried Michael, who also caught sight of the apparition, but on such a moonless night it was difficult to know if the object was a man or an animal.

Lady Alesia's heart beat quickly with that vague fear of the guilty. And as she turned away and drew the heavy shawl about her head a deeper gloom than the night shadows enshrouded it. For the first time in her life of guilt she recoiled with horror from her work, the light died out of her eyes, and with a frantic outbreak of passion she muttered, smiting her hands:

"There is some dark under-plot which I cannot unravel."

(To be Continued.)



[OVERHEARD.]

KATE BRANKSOME'S FOE. (A COMPLETE STORY.)

CHAPTER I.

A STRETCH of road, rising at an easy gradient, and wrapped in the deepest, blackest obscurity; on either side ascending fir-clad slopes dimly visible by reason of glimmering starlight, which tries to penetrate the road-chasm at their base, but fails. In the very heart of the obscurity, where the gloom cast by the firs is most intense on either hand—a shapeless density, a shadow within a shadow.

Just thirty minutes by the clock those last-named shadows have been crouching there. Now and again a hoarse murmur or a sullen, impatient growl has passed from one to the other; but for such interruptions the silence would have remained unbroken. Not a breath of air is stirring, the fir trees have stilled their whisperings—Nature herself is silent, as in a hush of expectation.

It comes at last—that sound for which the shadows have been listening. A footfall, far away upon the frozen road. Nearer and nearer it draws, and those shapeless penumbra quiver a little, and draw themselves together. Nearer and nearer until a solitary pedestrian is immediately abreast. Then, from either side the road out of the thicker darkness, these human shadows leap upon him.

One cry goes up to the frosty heaven; it is not repeated, for rough hands have thrust a gag between the victim's teeth, and are working it into his mouth until he is almost suffocated. Long, bony arms thrown round his body from behind have effectually pinioned his elbows; that indistinguishable mass in the centre of the road heaves and struggles, but the sufferer is practically powerless.

"Quick with the noose, Bill, quick!"

"Curse the noose! I can't get it out of my pocket."

"Knife him then."

But Bill, grappling with difficulty, ignores that gentle suggestion—an English Thug who has discarded the idea of bloodshed because of its riskiness.

An angry jerk disengages a coil of rope; in an instant it is fitted to the throat—in another a third shadow looms through the darkness and the cowardly assailant goes down like a felled ox. Then his companion, turning to flee, gets mixed up somehow with the prostrate man's legs and comes to the ground likewise, swearing horribly.

"Lie still, will you?" commands a voice, rising trumpet-like above the bass of the oaths.

The command is enforced so imperatively by a shower of blows and the pressure of a knee upon the blasphemer's chest that he complies.

"Can you hold him while I strike a light?" inquires a second voice, that of the gagged man, who by this time has removed the obstruction and is fumbling in his pocket for a matchbox. "When we see who the villains are we can settle how to deal with them."

The modest flame of the ignited vesta rises and glimmers faintly above the upturned, blood-smearred face of the overpowered villain, then it is held to that of his prostrate and senseless comrade.

The scrutiny completed it is flung aside, describing a brief fiery parabola ere it falls to earth, where it yet lies feebly blazing.

"Ralph Hodson!"

A smothered execration is the only reply.

"You need not take in vain the name of your Maker," the speaker continues, sternly. "Thank Him rather that you have this night been foiled in an attempt which would otherwise have rendered your life a short period of remorse, terminated by the hangman's rope. Listen! I recognise both you and William Short, who lies stunned beside you. To-morrow, if you are still in this neighbourhood, you will be committed to gaol upon a charge of attempted murder; meanwhile you have twelve hours in which to make your escape."

"Am I to let the fellow go?"

"If you please. He will look after his companion in villainy. These are two rascals who have just served their five years for a 'rattening' outrage. They will give us no further trouble to-night."

The prediction appears in a fair way to be fulfilled. As the two honest men proceed on their way the cowed rogue kneels down beside his prostrate comrade, having evidently abandoned all thought of carrying out his original design.

"Now I may thank you," says the rescued man to the rescuer. My name is Nathan Branksome; perhaps you have heard it before."

"Not to my knowledge."

"Umph!" and Mr. Branksome's interjectional grunt is decidedly indicative of disappointment not unminged with indignation.

"Well, look back yonder, and tell me what you see."

"In poetical language I see a black abyss studded with stars of fire; in prosaic prose I see the distant lamps of a town, which is, I presume, that towards which I was descending when I overheard a word or two which kept me near the scamps who assaulted you."

"It is the town of Silverbridge, and I made it," observed Mr. Branksome, complacently.

"You made it?"

"Bless my soul, man," exclaimed Mr. Branksome, with irritation, "where have you been brought up not to have heard of Branksome's Works? Branksome—the great machinist—you know."

"Yes, I know now. I am happy to have rendered you a service, Mr. Branksome; but Silverbridge is my destination and I am travelling out of my way. I must say good night."

"Not a bit of it," cried the machinist, eagerly, "what is your hurry?"

"I am hungry, footsore and tired."

"And you think," said Mr. Branksome, with indignation, "that I shall allow one who has just saved my life to go back singlehanded into the pit where those ruffians are still growling over their disappointment?"

"I am not afraid of them," said the stranger,

putting out his hand by way of leave-taking. Here, where the country was open, and there were no trees to overshadow the road, the outlines of each other's figures were visible enough by the starlight. Nathan Branksome grasped the proffered hand, shook it almost savagely and then drew it within his arm.

"My house is within a quarter of a mile, and dinner is waiting," said he. "I should be worse than a heathen to let you go till you have broken bread and eaten salt with me. Why, man, I have not even seen your face or heard your name."

"My face is a very plain one, my name is Guy Duverne, and my coat is not presentable," replied the other, in a tone of constant not unmingled with bitterness. Nevertheless, overpowered by gentle force, he was moving slowly along by the machinist's side.

"If you were as ugly as I, if you wore no coat at all, if your name were not Guy Duverne but Jack Stiles the travelling tinkler, you should be welcome to the best seat at my table. But you are a gentleman."

"Yes," was the monosyllabic response, so sharp and abrupt that it sounded almost like a cry of pain.

"I know it, by your accent. The touch of your hand told me you had done no work, but it was the tone of your voice that gave the clue to your position. We self-made men never acquire the trick of well-bred intonation. Mr. Duverne. I taught myself reading and writing, grammar and composition; I learned to speak in public, at a workmen's debating society, and to express my ideas, as I better myself, in vigorous Saxon—rart, pibby, and so on the purpose. But the burr of boyhood clings to me still. By-the-by, what is your profession?"

They had turned up a carriage drive, which was conducting them to a mansion, evidently of noble proportions.

Light streaming from many windows, from garret to basement, hinted at a liberal, almost prodigal style of housekeeping.

Nathan Branksome, interpreting the silence which followed his question as a tribute of involuntary admiration, waited awhile until his complacent patience was exhausted.

"What is your profession?" he repeated.

"That of vagabond," said Guy Duverne.

CHAPTER II.

"Your father is late to-night, Miss Branksome."

"Very," assented the lady, listlessly.

And the features of the first speaker darkened as he contemplated the faultless profile of her averted face, outlined against the purple velvet of the chair in which she sat.

Its delicate beauty reminded him of some priceless antique cameo; but the homeliest countenance would have charmed him more, at this instant than this lovely mask of scornful pride and languid self-possession.

So his features darkened, and there was resentful anger at his heart, but the tones of his next sentence denoted only mournful, submissive pathos.

In the game Piers Galvin had set himself to play that night, a game whereof he esteemed himself a master, no ebullition of wounded vanity or fretful impatience should tempt him to throw away a move.

"With what different sentiments we await his return," he continued, in accents that were sweeter than a woman's in their low, caressing gentleness: "You are bored by the delay, I accept it with thankfulness, fearing that every instant may be the last of our tête-à-tête."

"A misfortune which would indeed be hard to bear."

"You are pleased to be sarcastic, Miss Branksome, careless what pain your scornful words inflict. Kate, you cannot be ignorant that I love you."

Slowly the proud, refined face changed position upon the purple velvet. Slowly the girl's

great eyes, full of mocking light, met his own.

"Doctor Galvin," said she, haughtily, "my Christian name belongs to the members of my own family only. If a tête-à-tête, as you call it, induces forgetfulness of that fact—"

"I beg your pardon, I will not offend again," said Piers Galvin, looking from her to where, half-hidden by the green luxuriance of towering tropical plants, a younger girl, whose fair countenance was almost humble in its gentleness, sat drawing her fingers in absent-minded improvisation across the strings of a magnificent harp.

What imp of mischief, he asked himself, had suggested the vexatious wounding of this imperious demoiselle, when half the pains might have won as untrifling a prize in the person of her sister Grace?

But he did not translate his thought into words.

"Nevertheless the truth remains—I love you," he continued, sadly.

"Then the truth, if it is the truth, which I do not believe, is and ever will remain a matter of absolute indifference to me, Doctor Galvin."

It was a cruel thrust, albeit delivered with such quiet nonchalance. Through his armour of self-love it pierced, wounding him in that most vulnerable spot, his masculine vanity. If Piers Galvin could have reversed himself by marriage (with one word of the black magic eleven christs—tail of) her, what beautiful beauty the word had now been spoken. But he was wise in his powerlessness. When he planned the assault, he over-estimated the attack he had provided, like a skilled general, a way of retreat.

"Of that I am sure," he replied, quickly.

"My love is quite a hopeless one; it has never looked forward to a future. Why I allowed it to do so to-night I hardly know; perhaps because in its throes of dissolution it was stronger than I; perhaps because of an unacknowledged perception it would be well for me your hand should deal its death-blow."

He bowed his head as he spoke, until all his features were in shadow and his attitude was one of deep dejection.

Kate Branksome looked at him steadfastly, with some relenting in her proud eyes.

"Let us be frank with each other," said she. "You have never loved me, Doctor Galvin—on that point I would trust my woman's instinct. You may have admired and even coveted the beauty I am credited with possessing. You may have approved such share of ready wit as I may justly claim. Above all, you may have respected my father's wealth—"

"Indeed you wrong me," he interposed, in a protesting murmur.

"But as for love it is a word that should never pass your lips or mine—we are equally incapable of feeling it."

"Alas, no," said another murmur.

"I shall marry some day, because I am ambitious, and the aristocracy of great riches will not quite content me. I must wed—"

"A lord," said Piers Galvin, curtly; indicating, with a nod and a bitter smile, the only occupant of that spacious apartment who has not yet been mentioned.

He was a young man, picturesquely attired in the loudest of morning costumes, a whole suit of some woollen material, the salient feature of the pattern being a check as large as the squares of an ordinary draught board.

At that moment he lay upon an ottoman, with his feet in the air, balancing between them a terrified Persian cat, after the fashion in which he had seen a street acrobat balance a cannon ball the previous day.

Such outrages of the conventionalities were so common to Mr. Tom Bennett, in the society of his intimate friends, that this one had not hitherto evoked comment.

"You are mistaken," replied Miss Branksome. "Mr. Bennett is certainly presumptuous successor to a peerage, but I shall never help him to adorn the position."

"What's that about Mr. Bennett and his position? Tom Bennett's position is both

decorous and comfortable," cried a voice from the ottoman. "Confound the cat, she is as slippery as an eel. Here, puss, puss, poor puss! By-the-by, Miss Grace, can't you cheer our drooping spirits by playing 'He will return, I know him well, he would not leave me here to die,' apropos of the venerated pater?"

"He has returned," retorted the musician, looking up with that wise and gentle smile of hers, as the door opened and Mr. Branksome and Guy Duverne entered the drawing-room.

"Thanks to this gentleman," said Nathan Branksome, meaningly. "Mr. Duverne, let me present you to my eldest daughter."

"I am charmed to make Mr. Duverne's acquaintance," replied the young lady, after the slightest of pauses, which was notwithstanding sufficient to acquaint her with every detail of his appearance.

There was just enough of mockery in the tone, just enough of superciliousness in her frigid smile, to tell that she resented the introduction of this shabbily-attired stranger to the family circle.

Why, this slave was torn, his knees were threadbare, his coat was ragged at elbow, his boots were shapless lumps of leather.

"It is just like papa. I will lecture him well to-morrow," thought Miss Branksome, in her annoyance.

"And this is my second daughter, Grace," continued the unconscious machinist.

Then Guy, turning, saw a little hand outstretched to him, and gentle, dove-like eyes beaming with timid welcome.

Mr. Branksome's second daughter had noted more than the shabbiness of their guest's outer man; she saw the gleam of his eyes, the light in his cheeks, and the softer carriage of his head.

"This is Tommy Bennett, the plague of my life, and this gentleman is Doctor Galvin. I am very pleased to see you, doctor."

Which speech afforded Piers Galvin, explaining his appearance, an opportunity to ignore the introduction, but brought forward the proud possessor of the draughtboard suit, offering vociferous welcome.

"Poor beggar's down on his luck," was the thought that prompted the cordiality.

"Very well, now you all know each other, and dinner is served," said Nathan Branksome.

"Mr. Duverne, will you take in my daughter?"

Listlessly, with disdainful resignation enthroned upon her lovely face, Miss Branksome rose from her chair and met the glance of the man to whom she had been assigned.

What she read in it we cannot tell, but the beauty's cheeks were suffused in their turn with vivid crimson as he quietly turned from her as though mistaking the request and offered his arm to her sister.

CHAPTER III.

DINNER is over at Branksome Hall—the machinist thinks he had a right to bestow his own name upon a mansion built with his own money.

The family and the guests have returned to the lofty and spacious drawing-room, which Nathan's wealth and his daughters' taste have beautified until there is not its fellow in the shire.

By the law of natural selection they have split into three couples, equidistant from and out of hearing of each other.

Let us visit each in turn.

Planted upon the fleecy hearthrug, à la Colossus of Rhodes, and with his coat-tails under his arm, stands Mr. Branksome. Leaning upon the mantelpiece, in an attitude which displays to advantage the elegance of his frock-coated figure, stands Piers Galvin. His slender white hand covers eyes which brightened this instant at a remark made by his host. He has been trying for the last hour to provoke it.

"You don't seem quite yourself to-night, doctor."

"I am worried about business matters."

"Ha! ha! ha!"

And the keen eyes which watch the machi-

nist's face through fingers on which costly rings flash and glitter note that the very expression crosses it which he desired to produce, one of good-humoured and tolerant interest, such as we might accord to a child in difficulties.

To this man of business, whose brain is continually dealing with facts and figures, schemes and unforeseen complications, it appears rather a good joke that a country practitioner should speak of business cares.

"What is your worry, Galvin?"

"I bought a little freehold property some time ago, out of the savings of my practice, the purchase money being a couple of thousand pounds."

"Well, has the property bolted?"

"No, but a man to whom I had lent five hundred pounds, pending investment, and who should have paid up to-day, writes me that he cannot do so for three months. A pretty state of things, when the final instalment is promised by me for to-morrow."

"Your lawyer will find the money."

"So he says, upon mortgage; an excuse to run up a bill that will cause me to pay twenty per cent. for three months' accommodation."

"Or your banker."

"There speaks the millionaire," laughs Piers Galvin. "I do not doubt, Mr. Branksome, but that if you walked into his parlour, with a modest request for the loan of a hundred thousand, he would say yes and thank you; but if I followed to ask for a paltry five hundred, he would demand title-deeds which are at this moment in the possession of the vendor's solicitor."

Mr. Branksome considered a moment, weighing a commercial magnate's dislike to unbusinesslike procedure against the desire to oblige a man whose medical skill had once, as he believed, saved his daughter's life.

Then he took from the breast of his coat a large pocket-book, and the expression of intense though furtive anxiety with which Doctor Galvin had been watching him began to disappear.

"I always carry bill stamps, here is a five-shilling one," said the former. "Write me a promissory note at six months (if your debtor keeps faith you can redeem it earlier) for five hundred pounds, and in exchange for the note I will draw you a cheque."

"I cannot accept such kindness," said Piers Galvin, doubtfully, whilst his joyful face belied the words.

"Nonsense, man!" said the millionaire, seating himself, cheque-book in hand, at an escritoire, and Piers Galvin drew a deep breath of relief, as for escape from imminent and deadly peril.

The transfer to him of that delicate slip of paper meant no less than the preservation of a secret, to protect which he would have given five years of his life.

Grace Branksome is again seated at her harp kneeling upon a velvet cushion at her feet, his left hand grasping a sheet of music, pressed convulsively to his heart, his right extended theatrically, whilst his merry, round face beams with the fun of the situation, as that heir-apparent to a peerage, that lineal descendant of William the Conqueror, that clabby, slangy, and most undignified hero of the draughtboard suit yeleft Tom Bannett.

"I swe—ea—ear, proud mai—ai—aid, I love, I love thee well," he chants, in a voice the volume of which would not discredit the most execrating of street-vocalists.

Grace shakes her wise head at him with serene disapproval.

"Really, Mr. Bannett, you must 'swe—ea—ear' less energetically," she insists, "and although I played that passage again and again, and taught it you so carefully, you put in no less than five grace notes. Indeed you must stick to copy."

"I think I have been sticking to it pretty tightly," says Mr. Bannett, smoothing out the crumpled sheet, with an air of mock commiseration. "I say, Miss Grace, what a change has come over the demeanour of your lordly sister."

"Queenly sister, and you must not call names," corrects Grace.

"Queenly is a feminine adjective, and I want a masculine one to express the 'aughtiness' of her style. The demeanour of your lordly sister towards our dilapidated friend, the man of thews and sinews, the knight in threadbare armour, who rescues distressed manufacturers in the very nick of time, like a true Paladin of romance."

"She would indeed be ungrateful if she failed to show attention to one who has such claims upon her gratitude. I do not like the way you speak of him, Mr. Bannett. It is not like you, to make a jest of misfortune."

"Bless my soul, what have I done?" inquires the embryo peer, with round eyes of amazement.

"It is like me, to make a jest of everything and everybody; but if you think that I would not like to step into his worn-out shoes, that I do not admire him and recognise in him as true a gentleman as I have the honour to know, you are mistaken, that is all."

"Yes, I suppose we must concede that he is a gentleman," assented Miss Branksome, who, gliding unperceived over the rich pile of the carpet, had joined them before they were aware. "Grace, can you tell me where I shall find that book of German sketches?"

"When I saw it last, dear, it was in the music waggon, amongst your songs."

"He knows Germany well," said Miss Kate, turning away and seating herself upon a footstool to search the music in question. She made a charming picture as she sat there, with the black rosewood of the grand piano for a background. But Guy Duverne did not heed it. He closed his eyes, thankful for the brief respite from the labour of conversation. Five-and-twenty miles he had tramped that day, and now he felt very, very weary.

So he closed his eyes, whilst that proud, beautiful girl—who had at first resented his introduction, and who now, so he told himself, feeling the burden of an unwelcome obligation, was exerting herself to be civil—hunted for the sketches he had expressed a wish to see.

Her thoughts were busy with him the while. So far as he had read her the reading was correct. Repenting of the slight she had at first put upon him, she exerted herself to make amends. She would have been very gracious to this poor fellow, whose innate aristocracy was as conspicuous as his poverty, but that he had entrenched himself within defences of icy pride which could neither be melted nor broken down. It was a novel and unpleasant experience to be repulsed at all points, and the experience mortified and angered her. She had not abandoned the assault—nay, she was determined, at any cost, to achieve a victory, but—woe to the vanquished.

Perhaps she did not quite know her own mind. Dislike and respect, growing impatience and the desire to please, were so strangely blended at that moment. As she searched the music-waggon, a prevision (such as comes to us all at times) warned her that her own life, and the life of this stranger, would be brought into curious juxtaposition. Was it to be peace or war between them?

She asked herself the question, and decided that it might rest in abeyance until her beauty and her winningness had so far subjugated him that he should have no voice in the matter. Such an end was generally achieved without all this trouble. Where in the world had this wretched sketch-book hidden itself? Ah! Here!

Book in hand, she went back to her companion, crying out gaily that her quest had at last been successful, but he did not answer her. Guy Duverne was fast asleep in his chair!

With a red rose of silent anger on each of her cheeks, Kate Branksome sat down before him to study at her leisure the face of the adversary who had dealt her this final insult.

It was haggard and pale, as from insufficiency of nourishing food. There were lines of thought or of care that should not have creased the forehead of a man only four or five years her senior. It was a plain face, as its owner had averred to

her father, a very plain face, but a powerful one, with a stamp upon it that would bring the eye of the careless beholder back again, as correctness of features and of colouring could never do. "A foeman worthy of my steel," thought the girl, regarding him.

But there was no admiration in her mind, as she studied the countenance of her unconscious adversary. Her imperious nature was in arms against him who had insulted her. She was telling herself that until, humbled and powerless, her foe lay crying for mercy at her feet, there should be war.

CHAPTER IV.

THROUGH the din and uproar of Branksome's Works—the clanging of the mighty hammers, the roar of the furnaces, the constant whirling of machinery, through the army of workmen and the regiment of clerks, Nathan Branksome, on the morning after his escape, piloted the young man who had saved his life.

The great machinist was in his element. The pride of the warrior who fights his battles o'er again shone in his eye as he recounted how he had felt his way to triumph after triumph over the forces of Nature and over the difficulties which had beset his path from mendicant to millionaire. And the liking and respect he had at first conceived for Guy Duverne deepened as he noticed the ready grasp with which the latter's intellect grappled with unfamiliar revelations. "There is the making of a splendid man of business in him," thought Nathan Branksome, applying a test which was, in his opinion, decisive and supreme.

From the gigantic counting-house, in which toiled the regiment of clerks, the machinist conducted his visitor to an inner chamber, screened off with semi-transparent glass, and furnished solidly and plainly with a table, a few chairs, and a writing-desk with countless pigeon-holes.

"This is my private den, the sanctum sanctorum of the establishment," said he. "Now, Mr. Duverne, let me repeat the question I asked last night. In what way can I serve you?"

"Give me work and fair remuneration," said Guy Duverne, with bitterness. "It is a request I have proffered unsuccessfully for three months, realising the while how enviable was the position of him who could not dig and to beg was ashamed."

"Were you educated for any particular career?" asked the machinist, kindly.

"Only to throw away money that was not mine to spend," said Guy, with increased bitterness.

"Then I am not surprised you failed to obtain employment. Pardon my frankness, Mr. Duverne, and put your pride in your pocket whilst I make you an offer. Last night you saved my life and laid me under a heavy debt of gratitude. A few hundreds, or a thousand or two at the most, would fit you to practise one of the professions."

"It is quite impossible I should accept a gift," interrupted Guy. "Give me work and a fair wage. Also, if you will, the promise that I may claim any position in your service, if a vacancy occur and I can prove that I have fitted myself for it."

"I promise gladly. Vacancies are always occurring. There is but one at this moment, that of foreign correspondent."

"What are the duties?"

"To read and answer the communications of all my agents abroad. I keep two clerks who do nothing else, but one of them is in a consumption, poor fellow, and will never show his face here again. He is a German, and corresponds fluently, not only in that language, but in French, Spanish, Dutch, and Italian."

"I do not know Spanish, but I am tolerably well up in the other languages. I was educated at Heidelberg, and was accounted a good linguist. I believe that Spanish and Italian are very much alike. In a month I shall be able to undertake the Spanish correspondence also, if you will give me the post."

"Willingly," said Nathan Branksome. "The sick man's salary was one hundred and fifty. You shall have two hundred."

"I cannot accept a gift," repeated Guy, with cold decision. "If the position carried a salary of fifteen hundred per annum, and I felt myself capable of undertaking its duties, I would without hesitation ask for the appointment, but I cannot receive pay I have not earned. Will you take me to my desk and set me to work, Mr. Branksome?"

"Mr. Hilton will initiate you," replied the machinist, nodding to a gentleman who entered the sanctum at that instant, a gentleman with a bald head, half-closed eyes, and an insinuating oiliness of manner which inspired Guy with a vague prejudice. "Hilton is my factotum, my prime minister, my right hand, my other self; the master, in fact, of Branksome's Works when Branksome himself is not on the spot. Hilton, this young gentleman is Mr. Guy Duverne, my preserver last night in that little affair I told you of."

"I am pleased and proud to make your acquaintance, sir," replied the manager, with deferential smoothness.

"Mr. Duverne takes the position and salary of poor Bach, as foreign correspondent. Show him his stool, Hilton, and give him something to do," commanded the man of business, and the brief conference ended.

CHAPTER V.

To and fro, in the great drawing-room at Branksome Hall, paces the millionaire's eldest daughter, in a towering passion.

There are two spectators of the comedy—Grace Branksome, whose sweet, wise face expresses gentle regret, and Mr. Tommy Bannett, who is in an ecstasy of mischievous delight.

Mr. Bannett's attitude is mirth-provoking to a degree. His hands are clasped and his knees are shaking in affected terror, whilst his chubby visage indicates exaggerated mock-penitence.

"Oh, if you please, miss, I'll never do so no more," he whines, in so whimsical a tone that Grace bursts out laughing, in spite of herself, but Miss Kate's indignation is far too real and too wrathful to be affected thereby.

"It is not the first time by a dozen he has put this slight upon us," she cries. "I cannot think why papa persists in liking him and in seeking his society. One would think an employé is honoured in being bidden to his employer's table, but if Mr. Guy Duverne were a prince of the blood royal he could not be more chary of accepting an invitation to dinner. He is 'too busy,' forsooth."

"But he has to finish an article for the 'Machinist's Review'; they pay him five pounds for it," explains Tommy.

"It is my conviction Mr. Duverne would sell his apology for a soul for five pounds," retorts Miss Branksome, with acrimony. "It is just a year since papa picked him out of the road, a shabby-genteel tramp, with leaky boots and threadbare trousers, and a coat out at elbows. I wonder how much money he has earned since then."

"I can tell you," said Tommy. "One fifty as second foreign correspondent, two fifty as first, when old Gill departed this life and Guy took the double duty, one hundred for perambulating the works and keeping the poor beggars hard at it during the morning quarter, and about one hundred in odd ways, from the 'Machinist's Review,' etc. Some six hundred pounds in all, Miss Branksome."

"Exactly; out of which he spends at the most a pound a week, living like a common workman and refusing dinner invitations because he says he cannot afford to buy a dress coat. Of all the vices under the sun I think miserliness is the meanest and most contemptible."

"He is not a miser; he is—he is—he may be supporting an aged grandmother," said Tommy, blushing to the tips of his ears, in vehement but stammering repudiation of the epithet applied to his absent friend.

"An aged grandmother!" repeated Kate, with withering scorn. "Did not Mr. Duverne once tell us he had neither father nor mother, kith nor kin?"

She paused, her indignation cooled a little by the recollection of the air with which Guy had once made that avowal, and of the unwilling sympathy she had for one instant felt for him. By-the-bye, I am sorry I begged you to tell him the details of my Orphan Home scheme, and to ask his countenance and support. His help would anger me. I hope you have not asked for it."

"Ye-es—I have," confessed Tommy, with ludicrous embarrassment. "You were so urgent about it, you know. You told me to tell him that his influence with the men was so strong."

"I know, I know," interrupted Kate, with cheeks aglow and eyes that literally blazed with anger. "I condescended, having thy pet scheme so much at heart, to ENTREAT his co-operation. Well, what did he say?"

"That he could not afford a subscription," answered Tommy, reluctantly, "and that advocacy which was not backed by a pecuniary argument would do more harm than good."

"Mean, avaricious, discourteous, despicable. I will never willingly speak to him again," cried Miss Branksome.

"A lengthy list of opprobrious adjectives; may I ask to whom they apply?" said a voice in the doorway, the clear, ringing tones of which filled two of the party at least with dismay. "I have repented of my refusal and have come to dinner after all. Upon whom are the vials of your wrath outpoured, Miss Branksome?"

"Tell him," said the girl.

Her lovely face was deadly pale now and fixed as marble in its intensity of scorn.

Tommy Bannett was speechless with real consternation.

Grace came to the rescue.

"My sister has taken umbrage at your refusal to promote her pet project, the Orphan Home, and declares she will never speak to you again," said she.

"My punishment is greater than I can bear," answered Guy, with calm, incisive emphasis.

Then the two enemies stood facing each other as though measuring strength. Kate Branksome, majestic in her beauty, superb in her disdain, terrible in the rage which flashed from her imperious eyes—and Kate Branksome's foe, quiet and unmoved, save that about the corners of his mouth a smile of sarcasm still lingered.

How she hated his face. How ugly it was, with its lines of thought and care and earnest, mournful purpose, and with its impress of power. How she wished she were a foot taller, that he might not, with his head thrown back a little, be able to look down upon her with a half-smile in his eyes. How she wished she could brave it out as immovably as he, without rushing away to rage and sob in her own room.

Gathering her robe about her like a tragedy queen—the mocking thought was her own—she swept towards the door with quick, though not hurried, movement.

Divining her intention, he opened it and bowed low.

Somehow, as Miss Branksome stumbled up the broad staircase, she felt that in this skirmish she had been defeated.

CHAPTER VI.

"THERE was a sound of revelry by night," or rather there were many sounds which indicated that revelry was to be the order of the night at Branksome Hall.

It was the twenty-first anniversary of Kate's birthday, and in honour of her coming of age the great machinist had issued invitations for a ball, the magnificence of which should eclipse everything of a similar nature which the shire had witnessed for the last ten years.

For months his intention had been rumoured, and the few high and mighty people who had hitherto declined the honour of his acquaintance now made opportunities to cultivate it.

Few men can resist a dinner, few women a

ball; that is to say, when the cellar and the cook are unrivalled, and the ball is to be a vision of fairyland.

Little by little, and with small exertion on their part, the Branksomes had mounted to the highest rounds of the social ladder.

The father appeared free from the parvenu's pride of purse and vulgar ostentation, the daughters were admitted to be refined and accomplished gentlewomen, and it was beyond dispute that the annual profits of "Branksome's Works" were more than a king's ransom.

Lords and ladies of high degree, who had sons and heirs to their long pedigrees and impoverished acres, began to tell themselves that one of the Branksome girls, with a dower of a quarter of a million, would be a most desirable consort.

Kate Branksome, finding that the purest aristocrats are very much on a par with other men, and that the air of a countess's boudoir may be as saturated with petty gossip, petty malice, petty aims, and bitternesses of all kinds as a mechanic's cottage, began to reconsider that ancient ambition of hers, which she had almost confessed to Doctor Galvin—namely, to marry a lord.

As she sat before the pier-glass in her dressing-room, a lay figure in the hands of her maid, her thoughts were very busy with all that had occurred since then—very busy, she admitted with annoyance, in tracing the course of her feud with Guy Duverne.

Of all the men she knew he was the one whom her beauty and her wit had absolutely no power to attract.

From the very first he had worn the armour of impenetrable indifference.

Her little feminine arts of pleasing had glanced off to begin with, and he had fallen asleep in his chair.

Then her scorn, her disdain, and finally her pointed insults and unconcealed hatred had failed to move him.

He had gone on calmly and severely with his daily toil of body and brain, refusing even to lift his hand to brush away the insect that could not disturb him.

"I am the insect," cried Miss Branksome, aloud.

And her well-trained maid wondered, but held her peace.

And what an end! All this toiling and moiling to amass and hoard money. "I will be just to him," thought Miss Kate, with a fine affectation of magnanimity.

And with that she admitted, grudgingly, that men spoke well of her foe—that her father admired and respected him, and Tommy Bannett loved him, that the employés at the works held him high in honour and in liking. That even in a drawing-room, which was not his sphere, he won attention and deference; that beside his plain, thoughtful face, with its lines of care, handsome faces looked commonplace; that he did with his might the work of four ordinary mortals and pocketed their pay; whilst his disbursements would be covered by the wage of an ordinary artisan.

"His is a great character, utterly marred and corrupted by despicable, avaricious meanness," summarised the girl.

But she knew in her heart that she could have forgiven even this vice if Guy Duverne, miser as he was, could have forgotten his avarice for a little while to worship at her shrine.

As it was she hated him with hatred that must of necessity be active, not passive. She could not ignore his existence, she could not feel that the presence or the absence of her foe were alike immaterial to her.

Even to-night she was wondering whether he would come to this ball.

She longed for his appearance that he might see her in the full blaze of her beauty, surrounded by a little court of the most exclusive people in the shire. But she had an uncomfortable presentiment that he would elect, as a mere matter of preference, to spend his evening in his bachelor apartments, quietly thinking out an article for the "Machinist's Review," or, perhaps—she had heard of such eccentricities—

inventing some new mechanical toy for his landlady's lame child.

She had received many costly offerings that day, in honour of the event.

A diamond necklace from her father, a ring that had been her mother's from Grace, a subscription bracelet from the servants, a subscription portrait of her father from the works; also cards and trifling mementoes from numberless acquaintances.

Yet, in the midst of her plenty, she had thought of one person who had made no sign of interest, one whom she had been pleased to consider her foe.

In the midst of this wealth of presents a most ridiculous and preposterous thought had come to her—that she would be all the richer if a gift from him had been added, were it only a simple flower.

She despised herself for the thought as she took one parting glance, her toilette being completed, at her mirrored reflection.

Faultlessly and peerlessly beautiful she knew herself to be. As she saw herself as others would soon see her—the queenly form rising from the billows of her dress like Venus from ocean foam, the half smile upon coral lips, the peach-like bloom of the soft cheek, the dark, lustrous eyes, flashing brightly as the diamonds which lay upon her throat of snow—she rejoiced in her own exceeding loveliness, not with puerile vanity, but with honest gratulation, as a man rejoices in his strength.

With that smile still upon her lips she swept through the doorway and down the broad stairs to the reception-room, feeling as though she were treading upon air.

There she found Grace, a beauty of another type, one that appeals to the heart rather than to the senses.

Upon the younger sister's sweet, wise face there was a look that was almost of apprehension.

"Why so woebegone, sister mine?" cried Kate, gaily.

"Papa has not returned. Only think, Kate, if those odious government people detain him so that he has missed the train which is now due, we shall have to bear the whole burden of receiving our guests."

"That shall not prevent my enjoyment. But you need not fear such a dreadful contingency. Two hours ago I received a telegram saying that he would be with us before our friends begin to arrive."

"If you please, Miss Branksome," said a servant, appearing at the door, "the carriage has come back from the station without your father."

CHAPTER VII.

THE festivities at Branksome Hall are in full swing.

An hour ago an obliging nobleman, who consented, at Miss Branksome's request, to represent the absent host, received the last guest, and congratulated himself that he had proffered the last explanation of a thing he did not himself understand: why the great machinist, that is, having been summoned by urgent telegram to confer early in the day with a cabinet minister, had not yet returned.

The neighbourhood has not reckoned without its host in assuming that the Branksome ball would be like a glimpse of fairyland. All that lavish expenditure and perfect taste can do has been achieved.

The walls are covered with mirrors, with costly hangings, with floral devices of ingenious and exquisite design.

Soft music, of unseen players, "breathes along" the perfumed air, and upon the polished floor the elves disport themselves.

It may be that the elves are not all enjoying seraphic bliss, but in that case they skillfully disguise the fact—all of them save one.

The exception is our old friend Tommy Bannet.

Yet he ought to be happy, for the band is playing to perfection one of Chopin's waltzes,

and his arm encircles the waist of one who is by common consent the belle of the ball—the lady in whose honour it is given.

"I am afraid you find my dancing clumsy," he says, moodily, when they stop for breath. "Shall we sit out the remainder of the waltz?"

"Yes, if you will tell me what makes your feet leaden and your face glum. It is a poor compliment to my birthday, Tommy."

"I can't help it; it is the sight of that fellow," whispers Mr. Bannet, glaring savagely at a couple who whirl by them at that instant.

"Doctor Galvin! Why, he is dancing with Grace!"

"For the fourth time this evening," says Tommy, glowering so vindictively at an inoffensive masculine wallflower of the genus "dandy," who blocks the entrance to the conservatory, that the wallflower, moving aside to let them pass, takes down his eyeglass to see more clearly whether "that irate-looking little beggar weally means it—aw."

"And what is that to you, foolish boy? You are not jealous?"

"Oh, no, not jealous, only wretched and miserable and broken hearted, as she will be sooner or later if she believes in his lovmaking," says Tommy, with a futile attempt at sarcasm.

They have chosen a cunningly-placed seat, in a shady recess, where arums and ferns and towering Indian plants hide them effectually.

Securely screened from curious, prying eyes, the poor fellow whose first great sorrow has now come to him, covers his face with his gloved hands and mourns in silence.

Through the silence the distant music throbs, not merrily, the girl thinks, overpowered by that double revelation, but like a soul in pain.

It is in truth a double revelation.

Where have been her eyes? she wonders, where her intuition? not to have inferred long ere this, from numberless small signs which are now distinct enough, that Tommy Bannet was in love with Grace, and that Piers Galvin, her own rejected suitor, was wooing her.

There comes that way the rustle of a dress, the sound of low voices.

Another couple, who find an invisible resting-place only a yard or two distant.

For that cunning disposition of every screened seat Miss Branksome has taken great credit to herself, until now.

"At first my love was quite a hopeless one, it never looked forward to a future, it lived its life without annoying you," says a smooth voice, subdued to telling pathos. "It is only of late, dear Grace."

It is Piers Galvin, telling the false tale of affection, in almost the same words he told it to her, and as he may probably have told it to a dozen others, until practice made the manner of it perfect.

Impelled by a common instinct the unintentional eavesdroppers rise to their feet.

Kate Branksome, averting her head from the lovers as she sweeps by them on her companion's arm, looks, not at them, but at him.

Tommy Bannet will never again be to her merely a chubby, good-tempered boy, full of mischief, rejoicing in slang and loud costume.

He is a man now, pale and stern, bearing his heavy burden with grave, sad dignity.

Her heart aches for him, but she can only press his arm with silent sympathy, she cannot utter a word.

A footman meets them as they reach the threshold of the ballroom.

"Mr. Duverne desires to see you in the library, miss," is his unexpected salutation, and it brings to the girl's cheeks a vivid blush and to her glorious eyes a flash of anger.

"Tell Mr. Duverne it is utterly impossible I should wait upon him," she answers, with sarcastic impetuosity, and the footman disappears only to return with a card upon a salver.

"It is imperative that I see you without delay," runs the pencilled scrawl. "I must do so, if I present myself in ordinary attire amongst your guests."

There is no room for hesitation or evasion.

Erect and stately she sails from the room. Magnificently lovely and gloriously imperious, with diamonds sparkling on throat and arms of ivory and the superb rage of an outraged goddess upon her brow, she confronts her foe.

Behold, a marvel, at sight of which her anger is held in abeyance.

It is Guy Duverne who stands before her, but it is not the adversary she has known, severe, imperturbable, self-contained.

This is a man with a thoughtful, earnest face, which works with uncontrollable emotion, a man whose every feature speaks of great and tender compassion, a man whose hands are outstretched and whose eyes are full of tears.

"Tell me—tell me quickly," she cries. "Has there been an accident? Is he dead?"

"He is not dead—but—Can you bear the truth?"

"Anything, rather than this suspense."

"There has been an attempt to murder him. At this instant they are bringing him home insensible. In a few minutes they will be here."

She does not shriek or swoon.

She stands before him, pale to her bloodless lips, but icily composed.

"His life may yet be saved, if you have strength enough to set an example of courage and fortitude. Select the room to which he may be taken, let hot and cold baths be prepared, send all your guests away, save the medical men, as noiselessly as possible."

He stops.

Of what avail to instruct that poor girl who stands like a stone Niobe, frozen into dull, apathetic despair?

Guy Duverne sinks upon his knees before her and presses his lips to her poor, useless hands.

"Oh! Kate, Kate, Kate, I would have given my life to spare you this sorrow," he cries, in his grief and his perplexity, and at the sound of those broken accents she appears to awaken from her stupor, and thanks him with a waa smile.

"All that you command shall be done," she says. "Pray Heaven it be not in vain."

The guests have all departed, the house is still as the grave.

In one of the rooms lies the master of it, with his poor, battered face and head just freed from the blood-stains.

Above him bend Kate Branksome, Tommy Bannet, and Guy Duverne. In an adjoining apartment Grace Branksome and Piers Galvin are holding a consultation.

"Your father's skull is smashed in by a blow from the murderer's cudgel," said the latter.

"There is a very delicate and dangerous operation, by which the bone can be raised and his life saved. I am competent to perform it, and shall be in a position to do so five minutes hence when my instruments arrive. Meanwhile, dear Grace, there is time for you to reconsider the answer you gave to a question I asked to-night, a question upon which hangs the happiness of my whole future."

"What do you mean, Doctor Galvin?" asks the girl, recoiling, almost with horror, from an attempted caress.

"That the price I demand for the service is this dear hand."

"I have already refused it, sir."

"Do not repeat the refusal," urged her companion, meaningly. "If you persist in it I shall be so unnerved I shall not dare to undertake the operation, and your father will die before another doctor can be found."

"Is protest, is appeal, quite useless?" she asks.

"Is this your ultimatum, Piers Galvin?"

"It is," he answers, firmly, stretching his hand to her with a meaning gesture.

One thought for herself, all the fair promise of the future blighted, one thought of Tommy Bannet's eloquent face, as he passed them to-night in the conservatory, and she lays her fingers upon his.

To save a father's life Grace Branksome has given her own.

CHAPTER VIII.

BRANKSOME'S WORKS are in a state of ferment, and the town of Silverbridge, which the great machinist made—his favourite boast—is uncontrollably agitated; business is almost suspended whilst the people discuss conflicting rumours. Let us take them in order.

Nathan Branksome has been killed—murdered. Who did it? Why, Ralph Hodson and William Short, those fellows to whom he once gave five years for "rattening." They tried it on before, but this time they made sure work. Nay, but he wasn't dead when young Duverne found him weltering in his blood a quarter of a mile from the Hall in the dark part of the road.

Doctor Galvin says he must die? No, Doctor Galvin has performed an operation and is hopeful. Is it true that the manager has bolted with all the money he could lay hands on? Yes, quite true, and young Duverne with him. Impossible! Nay, but it is true, and young Duverne has forged a cheque for ten thousand pounds, and has got clear off with the money. He was always a little near, you know.

No wonder that Branksome's Works and the good town of Silverbridge are alike agitated. Let us make our way, by the lonely road in which Nathan's life has twice been attempted, and up the drive which is so carefully spread with tan, to Branksome Hall.

In a little morning room Kate and Grace Branksome, Piers Galvin, Tommy Bannett and the cabinet minister to whom allusion has before been made, are holding a council, in which Kate and the minister are in hot opposition.

"But, my dear young lady," reasons the latter, "let me draw your attention to the overwhelming circumstantial evidence against this Mr. Guy Duverne. During the whole time you have known him his ruling passion has been avarice, his one aim to amass wealth. The night your father was attacked you took from his pocket a cheque for one thousand pounds, which I had paid him that day on behalf of the government, and you handed it to this misguided young man. Within six hours he and the older criminal, Hilton, whose guilt is not disputed, are en route for London—a clear proof of collusion—and the instant the bank opens one of them cashes my cheque, which has been altered by means of chemicals from one to ten thousand pounds. Will any reasonable being deny that the government, having ascertained to demonstration that the forgers have taken passage to America in the same ship, is justified in telegraphing that both must be arrested and brought back upon their arrival at New York?"

"I deny it," answers Kate, indignantly—poor Kate! ever struggling with that generous, vehement, unruly temper of hers. "We all deny it, with the exception of one whom I believe to be the basest and most cowardly of men," and here her flashing eyes, falling upon Piers Galvin, brought a flush of shame to his cheek and a scowl to his brow. "For eighteen months, my lord, we have been on terms of close intimacy with him you would brand as a villain, and we know him for the grandest, noblest, truest gentleman it has been our good fortune to meet—with sad secrets in his life it may be, but with a nature incapable of crime. If this defence is not sufficient—"

"The accused must speak for himself," said a voice from the open doorway—the voice of Guy Duverne.

"I have brought back the villain and his plunder," said he. "The former is safely lodged in gaol and the latter in bank. Before I went away from Branksome Hall in the early morning hours I handed the thousand-pound cheque Miss Branksome gave me to Hilton, whose province it would be to deal with it. I did not go to bed, but turned up at usual at the works at six a.m. The gas was burning in the private sanctum, to my surprise, and on entering I found a heap of ashes in the grate, as

though quite a bonfire of papers had taken place. A sheet of blotting-paper once used lay on the table. Holding it to the light I read a legible impression of a letter from Hilton to some woman asking her to meet him at a place in Liverpool the following evening. I jumped instantly to the conclusion, based upon little more than former prejudice against the man; that he had started for London intending to cash the thousand-pound cheque and to get clear away whilst we were all paralysed by the critical condition of Mr. Branksome. To cut a long story short I just managed to track the rogue, to jump upon his steamer as it got under weigh and to make interest with the captain to transfer the foiled scamp and myself to the first homeward-bound vessel we fell in with. Voila-tout."

We have only seen Kate Branksome, as yet in her stormy moods, swayed by pride, disdain, imperious rage. We should hardly recognise her as she stands on the hearthrug in the library beside Guy Duverne. A new, odd shyness has fallen upon her—a rare and beautiful humility. She has lost for awhile her old queenliness, and long lashes droop over her glorious eyes, lest he should read a secret which lurks in their depths—a secret to which she had long been wilfully blind, telling herself that this man was her foe and that she hated him.

"I cannot forget your defence of me," he says, softly.

She does not answer, unless the momentary uplifting of those drooping lashes and the deepening roses of her cheek are a sufficient reply. Perhaps he thinks so, for he seems to accept it contentedly.

"I should like to tell you those 'sad secrets,' the existence of which you appear to have divined. You are the only person in the world to whom I would willingly reveal them, Miss Branksome."

"You did not call me 'Miss Branksome' when last we stood here," she remonstrates, gently.

"I lost self-command," he answers, constrainedly, "when confronted by the necessity of inflicting pain on one I—loved."

His tone is cold, his grave face is almost ugly in its hard composure, but she does not feel aggrieved. She is learning to know him better now, she begins to understand that almost from the first his assumed coldness has veiled a love he was too proud to own.

"This is my secret: My father was a man of pleasure, a spendthrift of the stamp generally described as 'the enemy of no one but himself.' When he died suddenly, and his affairs were wound up, I discovered that the fortune of a young lady whose guardian he was, a sum of twenty thousand pounds, was represented by the wreck of his estate, which realised when all claims were satisfied about twenty thousand pence. By selling £10,000 Consols, which had come to me under my mother's marriage settlement, I was enabled to pay at once, as his executor, one-half the liability, and I am saving every penny I can earn that I may be enabled to hand over the remaining moiety when it may be demanded without disclosing the truth. That is my 'sad secret,' Miss Branksome."

His face is averted but it attracts her. She can read all its lines now, of thought and care and suffering, and they draw her nearer and nearer until he can feel her perfumed breath upon his cheek.

"Is the secret to come between us, Guy, my hero, my—"

The secret did not come between them, and the sentence was never concluded. It may interest a few to know that Nathan Branksome is now as hale and hearty as ever, that the business of Branksome's Works is carried on by "Branksome, Duverne and Bannett," and that the senior partner's daughters would feel considerably aggrieved if anyone disputed their right to be considered members of the firm. As for Piers Galvin he came to the conclusion, after a conversation with Guy, in which allusion was

made to five hundred pounds of borrowed hush-money, that he would be wise in his generation not to claim the hand poor Grace had been cruelly forced to promise him.

BRIDGED BY HIS LOVE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Clytie Cranbourne," "The Golden Bowl,"

"Poor Lob," "Bound to the Wheel,"

"Fringed with Fire," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE STRAIN IS OVER.

NED MILSTEAD and his mother were for a moment mute with terror as the detective and his companions rushed into the room.

The woman was the first to regain her presence of mind, however, and hastily throwing a cloth over the pocket-book on the table with one hand, and dropping the gleaming ring into her pocket with the other, she came forward and asked, in a threatening, aggressive tone, while her seamed, tanned, malicious-looking face wore as evil an expression as any human countenance could do:

"What do ye want here, breaking into honest folks' houses?"

"We want a man called Ned Milstead for the murder of the Earl of Bracknell."

"He ain't here, that's his cousin," exclaimed the woman, with a ready lie.

But, as her eye fell upon our hero and she recognised him and knew that her assertion was vain, she added, maliciously:

"And 'twasn't Ned as killed his lordship; 'twas Rosie Redesdale, she told me so herself, and she gave me this ring to hold me tongue." And she flashed out Lord Bracknell's diamond ring defiantly.

She felt that the game was up, that all efforts to save her son were useless, but with the venom of a noxious insect that will sting another creature, though death to itself may be the inevitable consequence, she tried once more to vent her spite upon the unoffending girl whom she hated.

But the detective only smiled as he listened to her. This woman's malignity explained the mystery of the watch having been found in Rosalind's bedroom, and he replied, blandly, while he noticed that his fellow officer had adjusted a pair of steel bracelets upon the wrists of the still-bewildered Ned:

"In that case we shall have to ask you to go with us."

"But I won't go," screamed the woman, wildly, for the first time perceiving that her son was a prisoner. "I won't go, I ain't done nothing to go to prison for. I'll brain the first man as lays hands on me."

And she caught up a heavy wooden chair, swung it round her head, and seemed as if in her paroxysm of passion she would be quite capable of keeping her word, despite her sex and age.

Mr. Behenna had no desire to be brained. His own conviction was that nature had not endowed him with one ounce too much of that essential commodity, and therefore he kept at a discreet distance from the chair while he called upon Mr. Harcourt to assist him.

The mention of Harcourt's name, however, seemed to inflame the woman's excitement to the verge of madness, and to direct all her malice against our hero.

Brandishing her chair above her head she began to abuse him and his mother, and more particularly to speak evil of Rosalind. But as she poured out her torrent of foul-mouthed invective she forgot her means of defence. The chair swayed about her, it is true, but the swinging movement became slower and more uncertain.

At last when she was uttering some assertion particularly vile, she paused altogether, and the next instant her hands were pinioned, and she too felt the cold steel bracelets closing upon her wrists.

Still her tongue continued to pour forth a torrent of vituperation; until her son, who seemed to have resigned himself to his fate, said, somewhat impatiently:

"There, mother, shut up, you know you're telling a parcel of lies. Rosie Redesdale don't know nort about it, nor about you. I done it myself. He thrashed me till he could hardly stand, and I banged him till he hadn't got much of a head to stand with. If you hadn't made such a fool of yourself with that watch and ring we'd be safe now. Shut up, do. I was a fool to think of Miss Rosie, but I ain't had enough to want to hang her."

The suggestion of hanging and the sight of the manacles upon her own wrists sobered and silenced Martha Milstead, and she now asked, in a calmer tone, though still in an angry one:

"What's these on me for? I didn't kill nobody. I can prove I was here all the blessed time."

"I must warn you that whatever you now say will be taken down and may be used in evidence against you," said Mr. Behenna, seriously.

Whereupon Mrs. Milstead closed her lips tightly, as though grimly resolved to preserve silence evermore.

So the two prisoners were taken away to Cotelworth, there to remain in a police cell until the next morning, and Harry Harcourt returned to South Hall.

It would be difficult to describe our hero's emotions as he walked through the dark fields back to his step-father's house.

He could scarcely realize as yet the sudden change in his own life that Ned Milstead's arrest and virtual confession would make.

The dislike to being connected with such unsavoury work as the arrest of the miserable wretch whose combined vanity and vindictiveness had caused so much suffering and so much mischief, and the anxiety that was still upon him, made Harry come into his mother's presence with a very grave face, and made her for the moment think that the murderer had escaped.

But when her son's story was told Mrs. Vane's satisfaction was so great that she called her husband and told him all about what had happened, and then the three sat for a long time talking over all the phases of the miserable crime and its consequences.

"Now there is nothing to keep you and Rosie from getting married," said Mrs. Vane, brightly, "and if I were you, Harry, I'd buy back your father's property. I heard only yesterday that it is going to be sold. You can build a new wing to the house, and you and Rosie will have plenty of money between you, and it's only ten miles from here, so it will be nothing but a drive over, and the place isn't so troublesome but that you'll be able to go to town in the London season."

And so the fond mother rattled on, painting fair pictures of happiness for her son and his future bride, and bestowing not a thought of pity upon another son whose first radical mistake in life had been to love the same fair girl.

But Harry, through the whole of that night, could not forget Ned Milstead.

He loathed the man's crime, he despised the man himself, but he could not help feeling some pity for him, occasioned partly, perhaps, by his knowledge of the fellow's misplaced love, and partly by his recollection of the way in which the miserable wretch had vindicated Rosalind.

All through that night Harry could not sleep, his brain was too much excited.

He had determined not to write to Rosalind, or even telegraph to her, but to be the bearer of the good news himself.

But it was first necessary that he should attend the examination of the prisoners before the magistrates at Cotelworth.

When that was over he could start for London without further delay.

So directly after breakfast the next morning he and Mr. and Mrs. Vane drove into the busy market town.

But there was no examination of the two prisoners captured the night before, for one of them had gone on a long journey to a destination whence there is no return.

From what Harry could learn from the greatly disgusted Mr. Behenna, whose prey had thus escaped him, it appeared that the prisoners had been brought to the police-station the previous night, and when the charge was entered Ned Milstead, who had been very quiet during the ride, expressed his desire to make a statement.

He was first cautioned against such a course, but, being firm in his intention, he dictated and signed the following confession:

"I, EDWARD MISTEAD, confess that alone and unaided I killed my late master, the Earl of Bracknell. His lordship had thrashed me like a dog and had sent me from his service without a character, and I was homeless and starving when I saw him riding after Miss Rosie Redesdale at the hunt. I tried to stop her, but she struck me on the face and rode on. I don't think she recognised me, but my blood got up with the blow and the next minute Lord Bracknell came riding the same way. I started his horse, which reared so that both fell, and then with a big stick I'd got I beat in his lordship's head; till he was dead. Then I took his ring and his watch and his money and tramped back to my mother's house; but the heavy stick 'as I'd killed his lordship with I buried in the ditch near where the body was found. I gave my mother the watch and ring to hide. Nobody helped me, and nobody is to blame besides him and me."

"(Signed) EDWARD MISTEAD."

"(Witnessed) HENRY VANE."

When this was finished the murderer gave a sigh of relief, and was taken to his cell "as quiet as a lamb," to use the expression of the constable.

He was equally quiet and calm some hours later, when his guardian looked in upon him, but in the morning when his cell was entered he was found hanging from one of the bars of the window quite cold and dead.

He had torn his shirt into strips, whereon to hang himself, and he had cheated the law, even while by his confession he had done the innocent justice.

"Somehow I feared it," Harry Harcourt whispered to his mother when he heard the news. "But now I must hasten up to town. Rosie must hear this first from me."

A few hours later and Harry was in Rosalind's presence.

Even in the last two days a change had come over her.

She seemed like a woman who had put away happiness from her, who had abandoned hope, like one to whom the world had nothing but bitterness to offer.

The daily papers were always scrupulously avoided by her now, lest she should read some open or covert allusion to herself, and she was sitting listless and despondent as the afternoon was fading into evening, when Harry Harcourt, like one who had a right there, walked into the small drawing-room.

"Harry!" she involuntarily exclaimed, starting to her feet.

"Yes, dearest," he replied, stepping forward and clasping her in his arms. "I am come, my love, to tell you that you are mine, and that nothing more can divide us."

"Yours," she repeated, dreamily. Then she added, with a shudder, "Have you forgotten?"

"I have forgotten nothing, my darling," was the rapturous reply. "Everything is cleared up. Milstead has confessed that he committed the crime, and," lowering his voice, "he is dead."

The news was a complete shock to Rosalind. The highly-strung nerves, braced up to endure all unmerited obloquy, suddenly relaxed, and she fell helpless into her lover's arms, crying and sobbing bitterly.

But this prostration did not last long, and

then the story was told, and Rosalind knew that the cloud that hung over her was rent, and that the gulf that divided her from the man she loved was spanned.

"It was bridged by your love," she said, later in the evening, when Harry asked her to fix the day for their marriage, "and I am yours whenever you like to claim me."

So an early day was fixed, and meanwhile we will look in upon other people.

(To be Continued.)

HEALTHFULNESS OF FRUIT.

No intelligent person can doubt that the free use of ripe fruit is conducive to health. On the other hand, it is obvious that fruits as an exclusive article of diet do not meet all the wants of the system. The chemistry of the apple, the pear, the tomato, the grape, etc., is well understood, and it can be stated how much nutriment or assimilable food each is capable of affording; but this does not answer all the questions connected with the subject of the healthfulness of fruit. Besides furnishing nutriment, fruit exerts other influences upon the animal economy of the highest importance. The acids of fruit are not properly nutritive substances, but they produce physiological effects of a cooling or corrective nature, which are highly salutary.

Fruits are largely composed of water, and this fluid has come to them through extraordinary channels. The tiny root fibres have collected it in the dark earth, and, by vital action, it has been forced through the most minute tubes, until it is finally deposited in the fruit cells. So far as we know, the water undergoes no modifications; it is water in the soil, and it is the same in its wonderful associations in fruits. It, however, holds saccharine elements and other elements which modify its physical appearance and taste. The great amount of water contained in fruit is in itself an advantage, as it aids in clearing the alimentary canal and the other excretory ducts, and thus promotes healthy action.

Fruits are capable of sustaining life for long periods, but the lack of the nitrogenous elements detracts from their strength-giving power, and any one living exclusively upon them would not be able to labour effectively. We have heard of the man who rowed his boat along the entire coast of New England, sustained alone by whortleberries; but if the voyage had lasted six months, or even three, his nerves and his muscles would have entirely failed him.

The present is a season of abundant fruits. Perhaps never in the history of the northern and eastern States of America have apples been so plentiful. The rich and the poor can indulge in this noble fruit, to the greatest possible extent, at small cost. If the food is largely consumed in connection with a proper proportion of animal or nitrogenous foods, a much higher standard of health will be attained among all classes.

Our British song-birds and wild fowl will be protected from their enemies for at least five months in the year. By the new Act, which comes into force on January 1, any person taking or killing, or attempting to take or kill, any of the birds named in the schedule, between March 1 and August 1, will be liable to a fine for each bird.

A few weeks ago one of the most wealthy men in England died. Mr. E. Mackenzie, of Fawley Court, Henley-on-Thames, was well known in Liverpool, where he formerly owned much property. He was brother to Mr. William Mackenzie, who died in Grove Street, and who was a partner with Mr. Brassey in all his great railway works in Lancashire and in France. It is said that Mr. Mackenzie died worth upwards of four millions of money, and that he owned 70,000 acres of land in England and Scotland.



[RIVALS.]

WORTHINGTON'S WIFE.

A CHILLING, easterly wind, and a misty rain sifting through the dense foliage of the elm trees. The leaves turned dripping from the leaden sky, and tossed to and fro as the winds came souging through the trees; the dreary wind crept down among the laurels growing on the shore of the lake, bending them till a line of green rose and fell on the grey, turbulent waters dashing in spiteful "thuds" against the rocks. Cold and grey rose the mountains around Lake House; cold and grey stood out the granite walls of Lake House itself, and more forbidding and chilling than mountain or granite walls was the sky, and only yesterday it had hung its clouds of silver and gold over this beautiful mountain retreat, till it seemed—lying there asleep in the bright July sun—like a dream of Eden.

It was still early morning at the mountain house, and it seemed not a day to tempt the indolent boarders from their cosy rooms. Yet, where the foliage was densest and the shrubbery grew high, there slowly paced up and down the wet walk a man and woman, she wrapped in the thick folds of her waterproof, fair and stately as a mountain lily, and he, with his handsome dark face and noble bearing, fit mate for the queenly girl by his side.

The restless spirit brooding over the mountain

seemed to have permeated their very natures; the dreariness surrounding them had crept into the girl's low tones and listless action; like the surging of the waters against the unheeding rocks fell the pleading accents of the man's voice on the girl's ear. Not a line softened in the beautiful, weary face, coldly forbidding were her eyes as she listened to her companion's words.

"Then you will never forgive me? Oh, if you knew how I have suffered you would willingly forgive."

"Forgive! Teach me to forget first."

Bitterly fell the cry from the compressed red lips, and all the pent-up pain and bitterness of months—ay, mayhap years—seemed to break forth in her next passionate cry.

"Forgive? You remember that I have much to forget before I can forgive. I must first crush out the remembrance of that night and your cowardice; till that can be done forgiveness and I must be strangers."

"And think you I have not been punished for that cowardly moment? Have not five years of wandering and searching—feeling all the time as if the brand of Cain were on my forehead—been sufficient atonement? If there is no forgiveness in your heart, at least have pity. In those old sweet days you had compassion and love for the lowest; is there now left no tenderness for me?"

A spasm of pain shot across the fair face as she listened to his pleading; the red lips quivered

into softer lines, she threw back the folds of her cloak with an impatient gesture.

"Yes; I was learning to pity and forgive, learning to think calmly of the old time. The work that I had found to do, if it did not bring entire forgetfulness, at least helped to lessen the maddening pain. Then, last night, when you stood before me—like a spirit from another world—she leaning on your arm, looking proud and regal in my place, then I knew that I had not forgotten—nor forgiven. That first glance kindled anew the fierce flames I thought burned out. She, thank Heaven! did not recognise in me the timid girl of other days. That you and I might also forget! We must meet as strangers—forget that we have met, for I must be and am dead to you—dead!"

The winds caught up the whisper, murmured it ever among the trees, repeated it on the mountain side till echo came back to the man, mockingly, "Dead to you, dead!"

"Dead! And I have just found you! Never! Are you going to let pride separate us?" passionately. "Look up; let me see the old trustfulness in your dear eyes, my darling, my—"

"Hush!" sternly interrupting him, face and eyes filled with wrath. "Hush, not that name, not that! When you will call me that before the world, then, and not till then, will I forgive and forget all."

The flush that had surged across her face, like a wave of sunshine sweeping over a bleak mountain side, slowly receded, leaving it as cold and hard in its outline as sculptured marble.

"We must meet no more; our paths lie separate now," with a pathetic quiver in the sweet voice she vainly endeavoured to steady. "I must go in."

She drew her cloak more closely around her and turned away. He walked slowly by her side up to the wet walk, and then, opening the hall door, watched the slender form disappear up the winding staircase. Then he, too, went his way.

The rain continued to fall drearily; the waters of the lake fretted against their rocky barriers; the leaves hung dripping as before, and nothing whispered in the tell-tale murmurs of the strange words spoken.

"Good morning, Miss Santley! Why, Arliss you here? Glad to see you at Lake House."

"Yes, Mr. Burton, we are here for the season. Thus saith my cousin, Arliss; and his word is law."

Mr. Arliss Worthington looked up into his fair cousin's face and smiled. It was as Miss Santley said; Arliss's will was "law" with her and with his widowed mother, however haughtily they ignored the fact.

Had George Burton been questioned he could have given a true, clear, and concise history of this wealthy and exceedingly aristocratic Worthington family, and the no less wealthy and haughty Tressa; orphan niece of Mrs. Worthington.

It was Mrs. Worthington's cherished hope that her son might wed his beautiful cousin, and thus unite the aristocratic names and rich estates of the two families. But the haughty heiress found no favour in Arliss's sight, and though she had remained five years free—for his sake—he was no nearer offering the heart she coveted than on the day she came to live at Arliss Hall.

Perhaps the united efforts of mother and niece might have at last been crowned with success; perhaps Tressa, by her subtle fascinations, might have succeeded in trapping the wary Arliss in Cupid's meshes had it not been for the image of a sweet young face and a pair of pansy-hued eyes that would haunt Arliss his life through.

It was an old story forgotten long ago, his mad passion for his mother's little companion; and the sudden disappearance of pretty May Ellis caused only a ripple in the placid society waters. Then she and the story were alike forgotten.

Arliss had been absent from home five years—in search of his lost May, the audacious ones

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said—returning at last in time to join his friend Burton at Lake House. Mrs. Worthington and Tressa accompanied Arliss to the mountains, neither desiring to be parted again from the wanderer.

"We will remain at Lake House all the summer if it is pleasant," decided Arliss, as they turned their faces thither; and the place was pleasant, so Arliss would remain.

A handsome-looking couple Arliss and his cousin made as they stood on the piazza, his dark, handsome face and flashing black eyes a striking contrast to her fair Saxon beauty.

Later, at dinner, many eyes turned to survey the new arrivals; many the whispered comments as they passed to their places.

"His wife, probably; and he seems already weary of her," was the unanimous verdict.

Arliss was strangely quiet, almost taciturn, scarcely heeding Tressa's lively sallies. There was an eager, expectant look in the dark eyes. From time to time he took a careful survey of the long dining-hall, till at last a glad light shone on the weary face and in his eyes.

The neat waitresses, in their white aprons and caps, fluttered up and down the dining-hall like a covey of sparrows.

Near the window, quietly overseeing and directing the others, stood a young lady—for lady she was in every graceful movement—proudly unconscious of the admiration her beauty excited.

It was not so much the wonderful beauty of form and feature that constituted Ray Hastings's peculiar charm; rather it was that rare nobility of character shining in the pansy eyes, stamped upon the sweet, weary face, that won admiration and honest respect from all.

She was head waitress at Lake House, and had been there three seasons, performing her humble duties with a stately grace the proudest lady might have envied.

Arliss's dark eyes never wandered from the window where she stood.

Once the violet eyes were turned toward him—soft, tender eyes, full of pleading; but they wandered aimlessly again up and down the long row of tables.

"Dear me, Arliss, I do believe that you are fascinated by the pretty girl over there, for you have not taken your eyes from her face in fifteen minutes," and Tressa laughed teasingly.

A dark flush overspread Arliss's face.

"Ah, Tressa, so you have been watching me for fifteen minutes? Thanks."

"Oh, we can excuse him, Miss Tressa. Miss Hastings is a very pretty girl, and Arliss displays his taste," smiled Burton, eager to ward off a war of words.

"But she is nothing but a servant. I see nothing so very beautiful about her; true, she looks well as a waitress."

Arliss fixed his contemptuous eyes upon Tressa's scornful face, and the indignant reproof in his tones silenced her, bringing a faint flush to the fair cheek.

"Mere beauty of countenance, without the expression which betokens a cultivated mind and heart, amounts to very little, and soon loses its fascination."

"Fudge, Arliss! Deliver me from your strong-minded women."

"Not strong-minded because intelligent. A simply pretty face will soon tire one after the first freshness is gone."

Ray Hastings suddenly turned a slightly flushed face toward them, looking full into Tressa's eyes; grey eyes met pansy eyes coldly, mockingly; pansy eyes in haughty surprise looked quickly away.

The cup which Miss Santley held in her hand suddenly fell with a loud crash to the floor, spilling its contents over the rich silk she wore. Miss Hastings was at her side in a moment, brushing off the trickling drops.

"Let me assist you, Miss Santley. How unfortunate."

Tressa hurriedly left the dining-hall.

"Very unfortunate!" muttered Arliss, under his breath, looking into Ray's face.

Ray quietly gathered up the broken pieces.

Mrs. Worthington soon joined her niece in her apartment. Tressa's calm repose of manner was gone, and she paced with swift strides the long suite of rooms, her grey eyes black with excitement or passion.

"Did you see her—did you see her?" broke fiercely from the compressed lips. "Oh, she is always to come between us—always! No wonder he came here! I see it all now. How I hate her! Yes, hate her, and they shall both feel what my hate is!"

"Do nothing rashly, child. You may be mistaken," said the old lady, softly.

"Mistaken? Not I! But that girl shall not remain here."

"Do nothing rashly, Tressa," anxiously.

"Bah! Let her keep out of my path—I hate her!"

An hour later Tressa trailed her silken skirt down the piazza, not a trace of the storm of passion that had rent the heart visible in the haughty face. Arliss was nowhere to be seen.

"Gone off for a walk," Burton said, coming up with Mr. Ainesly, a wealthy manufacturer, and introducing him to the new beauty, with whom he was already enamoured.

Once Ray Hastings's sweet face appeared in the doorway.

"A very handsome girl for one in her position," murmured Tressa, in her dulcet tones.

"Yes; dress her in rich garments, deck her with precious gems, and she would be queen of beauty anywhere."

"Beauty unadorned is adorned the most."

Every eye turned to greet Arliss as he joined the group. Tressa laughed coldly at his eager words.

"Cousin Arliss ought to know; he is most partial to beauty unadorned."

"Ah! then that accounts for my presence here. Let me congratulate you, fair cousin," he retorted, meaningly, surveying her from the tip of her carefully arranged coiffure to the toe of her dainty slipper.

"I did not know that you would be taken so easily captive, Arliss, my boy," from Burton.

"Very much depends upon the captor," and with her last meaning hit, evidently felt by Arliss, Miss Santley walked away.

That was a gay season at Lake House; full of golden sunshine and summer gladness were the hours as they all too quickly flew away. Mr. Ainesly hovered around the heiress like a bewildered moth around the candle-flame, till the busy ones began to whisper of another romance in their midst.

Romance? Ah, well! Far better is it that we do not see beneath the smiles, or analyse the laughter that helps gladden some summer hour. After all is it not an unselfish hypocrisy which buries its own wormwood out of sight for another's sake?

Arliss's admiration for the beautiful dining-room girl and Miss Santley's ill-concealed jealousy, created a quiet excitement; but the actors in the little drama played their parts, dreaming not that an end must come and the curtain must fall at last.

"Arliss, do you not think that respect for peoples' comments, if not regard for our feelings, should cause you to cease flirting with a servant girl?"

There were fire in Tressa's dark grey eye and deep passion in the sneering words. She confronted her cousin as he came across the lawn, making him pause in his walk; and that was an unwise move of yours, fair Tressa!

"Flirting!"

For a moment he held her speechless with the wrath in his face, the indignation in the one low word. There comes a time in every life when, without cloak or garnish, the blackness, the bitterness, the hatred, is at last laid bare in all its hideousness. Such an hour had come to them; they were no longer to fence with sheathed weapons.

"I said flirting," defiantly.

"Flirting! Were she other than the noble girl she is, it would not be flirting with us, Tressa Santley. As my wife, Ray will ask no favour, all will pay homage to her—my peerless one!"

"Your wife! Never! Arliss Worthington, you must be mad! Your wife indeed!"

"Yes, my wife! If that is madness I will be gladly mad."

"She shall never be your wife! You have spurned me, Arliss Worthington, but she shall never have my rightful place. I hate her white face, her low—"

"Tressa, take care!" his dark eyes ablaze with just anger. "I will hear nothing you can say; be careful, there is such a thing as too many words."

"Your darling has you well governed," sneeringly. "Auntie already loves her!"

"Let us be friends, Tressa. Why this foolish anger? It is better to live in harmony. My darling bears no ill-will now, she will forget the past, and will love you and mother if you will permit it. You will have to be civil to my wife."

"Yes, we will be friends, it is best to be friends, and be happy together."

There was a sound of laughter floated to them on the perfumed air, the tread of light footsteps coming along the gravelled walk.

Tressa caught a glimpse of a slender form disappearing behind the trees. She turned abruptly away, leaving Arliss to pursue his walk.

"A strange, passionate girl when aroused. Poor Tressa!" muttered the man, now fully realising the passionate depth of her love for him, and pitying her with his whole heart.

Alas for a woman when, in return for her heart's best love, she receives but pity or contempt.

The summer light and brightness fell all around about Arliss, the soft breeze from the blue lake fanned his cheek, and the mountain calm stole into his disturbed soul, causing him to forget the present and live once more in a past he was striving to forget.

He saw himself once again, a young man, proud and indifferent, witnessing the stormy scene in his mother's drawing-room enacted five years ago.

He knew why the haughty mother and stately Tressa should so far forget their high-bred calm as to indulge in a stormy passage of words, and from time to time glanced expectantly towards the closed door.

Then the door opened.

Ah, there was no indifference in his face now! A petite, girlish form, a crown of golden curls shading the white brow, bright, terrified pansy eyes, mute, quivering lips begging for sympathy from mother and cousin, and asking in vain.

A fair picture made sweet May Ellis—a picture never to be forgotten.

The girl's tremulous voice at last broke the silence.

"You have sent for me; I have come."

"Very well, Miss Ellis. I would like you to make the same declaration you made yesterday; and, my son, I would have you attentive," in her coldest tones.

"I am Arliss's wife, Mrs. Worthington!"

Ah, why did his heart turn coward then? Why should the sneer on his mother's lips seal his own and cause him to turn his tell-tale face from May?

The proud woman—his mother—turned with her amused, incredulous smile.

"And what have you to say, my son?"

"I—I—do not be alarmed, for I—you know that I—"

SHE interrupted his evasive reply, her cheek burned crimson with indignant shame.

"Arliss, you must answer 'yes' or 'no'! Am I the girl you married two weeks ago? Answer me!" her face paling with sudden fear when he again hesitated.

"You are rash, May. I—I—you know we—that is—"

"Then, Arliss, you are a coward. I will not force you to own me. Am I your wife?"

"Your avowal is premature. We—"

"That is your answer?"

"May, think—wait. I—"

Then the beautiful eyes dilated in anger, the red lips were compressed in hard, stern lines.

"That is your answer! Very well; be it as

you will;" her young voice was hard and bitter; "be it as you will, sir."

She opened the door and glided swiftly away. Then the better nature was aroused within the man; a look of triumph was in Tressa's eyes at this signal defeat of her rival which was very hard for Arliss to bear.

"May, wife, stay! Mother, she is my wife, she speaks the truth—oh, May, darling, come back!"

His voice died away in the quiet hall, and echo answered his call. Beautiful, hasty May had gone. Gone with her sense of bitter wrong, her aching heart—but where? The truly outraged mother and cousin haughtily ignored the young husband's confession, and May's name was never mentioned in their presence.

Five years dragged their long months away, and Arliss's eyes grew dim with waiting and searching for his lost bride; and then, at last—

Miss Santley has hastened down the walk. Her jealous intuition told her that Ray was near, and she hastened to confront her rival. Miss Hastings sat alone in a little side grove away from the frequented walks. It was a favourite retreat of hers, being seldom disturbed by the presence of the boarders, and here she spent many quiet moments when her duties were completed in the house. Ray felt restless this afternoon, could in no wise regain her usual calm. She opened and closed her book, finally sat with folded hands, staring apprehensively at every sound.

Then the bushes were parted, and Tressa glided into the grove. Ray, with gentle courtesy, bade her unwelcome visitor be seated. One day, as Ray wandered along the mountain-side, a shiny reptile had crossed her path, protruding its forked tongue, and hissing in defiance as its shining folds disappeared in the underbush; again she felt as if the glitter of the serpent's eye held her terrified; its hiss seemed sounding in her ear.

"Can I do anything for you, Miss Santley?" after she had regained her usual composure.

"Thank you, no," coolly. "I hear that you are soon to leave Lake House, Miss Hastings; but I would not mind people's talk. Arliss is so indiscreet."

The fair cheek flushed at the insinuation. "I am not going away. I fail to understand you, Miss Santley."

"It isn't worth minding. When Arliss and I are married—don't say anything, please—of course it will soon be forgotten. Arliss is so good—and you are too pretty to be flirted with," a fair semblance of frankness in her tones.

"Arliss and you are married? Never!"

Tressa flushed under Ray's quiet look of scorn, trying to speak indifferently.

"Yes, I suppose some day Arliss will make me give up my freedom."

"Indeed!"

"What do you mean, Miss Hastings?" stung into madness by the mocking tone. "You will never be his wife! You might be—"

"Take care, or you may have leisure to repeat those words! Your time for injuring or terrifying me is past. Look at me. Who, think you, will be his wife now? Yes, I see that you remember."

"I do remember; and you shall never, NEVER be his wife!"

Ray's answer came low and distinct.

"Do your worst, Tressa, I AM—"

There was a flash of steel in a woman's jewelled hand, a click, then a woman's wild cry rang out on the summer air. Golden curls were wet with a bright fluid oozing from the wounded head; sweet panny eyes were closed, and a white, still face pressed the darkly stained grass. That, only that!

There was a sound of trampling feet, cries of fear and distress.

Arliss first reached the place, and raised the fair head.

"Oh, Ray! Has she killed you, my darling?" he cried.

Then a confused whisper of voices filled the

grove—questions and answers were returned in rapid succession.

Was she dead? Who shot her? How did it happen? It was an accident, probably, but none knew; and the mystery was never to be revealed by the actors in that almost tragedy.

Ray was not dead, only wounded. A few days after the exciting event there was a new titbit for the gossips. Ray was Arliss Worthington's wife! And Mrs. Worthington, holding one of the girl's hands tenderly in her own, Tressa, sitting by, calm, but deadly pale, offered no denial.

The thunderbolt was launched, and Mrs. Worthington and Tressa calmly accepted the inevitable.

Punishment follows quickly in the footsteps of wrong-doing. Wreath the lips in smiles, fill the hours with laughter and song, yet memory cannot be banished; conscious guilt embitters all things, and mirth is a mockery. The end was not yet. There must be one more surprise in the chapter of events at Lake House.

Mr. Ainesly and Miss Santley were engaged, and his handsome diamond prettily sparkled on her white finger, her smiles were sweetest for him. Happy Tressa! How she had ever overcome her first dislike for him was not explained. It was one of man's victories, one of woman's sweet inconsistencies.

"You will be very happy, Tressa," one day said her aunt.

Mrs. Worthington was reconciled to her son's choice now, for Tressa would be happy at last.

"Yes, auntie; I shall be too happy to live very long," laughing softly.

"You look so happy and good, dear, that I am never weary of watching you," gazing fondly into the bright eyes, and listening to her merry laughter.

"I feel tired; I shall be glad when it is over, aunt," she said, one day, as she went wearily to her room.

"Well, love, it won't be long; then it's over."

"Yes; soon over, dear aunt."

The next morning Mr. Ainesly waited long for his beautiful betrothed to take with him a morning ramble—waited in vain. That morning, nor ever again, was Tressa Santley to walk by his side; never again was her jealous love to come between husband and wife.

Pride, jealousy, hatred, revenge—dead in the stilled heart of the for-ever-silent form. Killed by an overdose of laudanum, taken to produce sleep, the physician said. Taken to produce death, Arliss and May whispered, and Mr. Ainesly suspected the truth.

"Finis" was written at last. In beautiful Greenwood weary, wicked Tressa had ceased from earthly troubling and was at rest.

Lake House knew the Worthingtons no more for many a long year. Never again will May Ellis Worthington be sent from under the sheltering roof of Arliss Hall; never be cast out from the love of her who at last thinks it is the sweetest music to hear from a pair of sweet lips the word "mother."

FACETIÆ.

BY JOH TROTTER'S BROTHER.

WHEN is it possible to mistake a horse for a hypocrite?

When you take him for a canter. —Punch.

THE DANCING SCOTCHMAN.

AN institution that ought to have been kept up specially for the Caledonian Hall—All Macs. —Punch.

NO MAN'S LAND.—Property in the Emerald Isle. —Punch.

VALUABLE TO ARTISTS.

WHY is an illustration at the top of a page better than an illustration at the bottom?

Because it's a cut above it. —Punch.

JUVENILE OFFENDERS' DEFINITION.—"Criminal Work"—Flogging. —Punch.

CONFUSED ASSOCIATIONS.

"AND where did these Druids live, Tommy?"

"They lived in groves of oak."

"And in what particular ceremony were they engaged once a year?"

"Er—let me see. Oh! in kissing under the mistletoe!" —Punch.

BY THE WAY.—It seems natural to speak of the pavement in front of the New Law Courts as the Causeway. —Punch.

DIPLOMACY.

NURSE (to professional friend making a call): "Well, nuss, sez he, 'igh and 'orty like, he sez, 'Wot do you think?' sez he. 'Doctor,' I sez, quite differensial, I sez, 'I'm quite of your opinion,' I sez. 'And I'm of the same way of thinking, nuss,' sez he. And so we settles it."

PROFESSIONAL FRIEND (much interested): "Lor! And wot was his opinion now?"

NURSE: "Bless yer 'art, my dear creetur, in course he never hadn't given none!" —Punch.

"WHAT a beautiful thing, my dear, is a rosy cheek." "Yes, husband, but how great the contrast when the blush settles on the nose."

THE smaller the calibre of the mind the greater the bore of the mouth.

THERE was a young man in Chagrin,
Who fell in love with a twin;
And, whenever he kissed her,
He found 'twas her sister;
This spoony young man of Chagrin.

EXACTLY.

How do we know that the business of a hairdresser is more extensive than any other?—Why, don't you see? Because it extends from pole (poll) to pole. —Judy.

A "SHOCKING" AFFAIR.—Piling sheaves in the harvest field. —Judy.

THE DISTANT FUTURE.

PLAYFUL LITTLE WIFE (just married, to husband thing holding cloak): "And now, you clumsy dear, do let me show you how you ought to hold it! Recollect, you'll have to do so all your life!" [For the first time since the ceremony he thought a lot.] —Judy.

TO TOURISTS.

ALPINE climbing is supposed to be a remarkably healthy exercise for people whose hearts and lungs are strong. Take care, however, that you don't over-exert yourself, and fall into a deep decline. —Judy.

QUITE TRUE.

LITTLE GIRL (about five years): "Mamma, can't anyone marry more than three times?"

MAMMA: "I don't know, my dear. But why do you ask?"

LITTLE GIRL: "Because the clergyman always says in the church, 'For the third and last time.'"

—Judy.

THE "BURNING" QUESTION OF THE HOUR.—The price of coals. —Fun.

A BLUNT "SAW!"

THE victim who was induced to buy the sham leather portmanteau by its close resemblance to the genuine article now declares that the man who first started the saying, "There's nothing like leather," must have been entirely ignorant of what a skilful manipulator can do with brown paper. —Fun.

THE average age of a hog is only fifteen years. This always consoles us when we see a man spreading himself out over four seats in a railway carriage.

"A GREAT composer"—Chloroform.

THE girls have a new scheme of flirting with their parasols. The boys return with their canes. Sometimes the old gentleman takes a hand in the game: he flirts with his boot.

EPITAPH for a hairdresser.—He dyed at his post.

"A NEW WAY TO PAY OLD DEBTS."

FIRST GENTLEMAN: "Oh, I'm all right now, I've cleared off all my debts."

SECOND GENTLEMAN: "How did you manage that?"

FIRST GENTLEMAN: "Easiest thing in the world: borrowed a hundred and paid off everything."

—Fun.

M.P.-IOUS FATE.

A COSTERMONGER can always claim to be the superior of an M.P., for while the former may be a common man, the latter is clearly a Commoner.

—Fun.

THERE IS A USE FOR EVERYTHING.

SHARP CHILD: "And so you are very poor, ma'am?"

AGED PARTY: "Ah, I'd be glad of a copper from anybody."

S. C.: "I've got a bad shilling—will you have it?"

A. P.: "A bad shilling ain't no use."

S. C.: "Oh, ain't it! That shows you don't go to church, and never puts money in the plate."

—Fun.

"SWEETNESS AND LIGHT."

(Dedicated to the School of Advanced Thought.)

I CRAVE with a craving intense,
To which words do justice but slight,
I long with a longing immense,
Æsthetical "Sweetness and Light."

I seek it in London in vain,
In vain o'er the pavement I jog;
For Sweetness I find but a drain,
For Light I encounter a fog.

I search academical groves,
And venture hereon to remark,
That strangely it somehow behaves
All Dons to be sour and dark.

I follow an African track
Where white man ne'er planted his
feet,
To find that the niggers are black,
And anything rather than sweet.

I hunt ev'ry new-fangled book
(Who knows all the volumes I've
read?)—
'Tis useless for Sweetness to look!
And Light? Lor! They're heavy as
lead.

In vain from sage-green damozels
This Sweetness and Light would I
cull;
I find these æsthetical belles
Are awfully bitter—and dull!

I'm longing for Sweetness and Light—
Oh, tell me, oh, where can it be?
Oh, bid not my fancy take flight
By calling it fiddle-de-dee.

Is Sweetness and Light then all stuff?
No! A pastrycook pities my plight;
And I greedily eat up a puff,
For there's Sweetness in that—and
it's Light!

—Fun.

MOTTOES FOR A BILLIARD PLAYER.—Mind
your P's and "Cues," and Nothing "Hazard"
Nothing Have.

—Fun.

THE MOST "CREDIT"-ABLE SYSTEM.—Ready-
money down.

—Fun.

WHISH!

CONSIDERING the notorious severity of Russian
officials in the matter of corporal punishment, it
was unfortunate that a contemporary, when re-
ferring to the trial trip of the Livadia, should
have stated that the speed attained by the Czar's
new yacht was sixteen "knouts" an hour.

—Fun.

MOTTO FOR LAWN TENNIS PLAYERS.—"Un-
je serval."

—Fun.

IMPORTANT QUERY.—When a tailor bathes
does he consider it inconsistent to take a header?

—Fun.

Who will say now that Shakespeare was a prophet? Considering that we have this season had fogs in September and snow in October, he must have meant the year 1880 when he said, "Now is the winter of our discontent."

—Moonshine.

THE GREY MARE THE WORSE HORSE.

PAT: "Oi don't think, Biddy, o'll go to-night with Tim Rafferty and Ted Murphy and thim other bhoys to shoot ould Denison."

BIDDY: "Shame on yiz, Pat. If yiz don't go ye'll be a thraitor to the good cause. But since yiz said it, ye can stay and look after the childer, and o'll go instid, and be glad of the change."

—Moonshine.

DRIVING THE COWS.

Up the lane at night I see her,
Driving home the cows,
Switching them with alder branches,
If they chance to browse.
Very dusty are her bare feet,
Short and scant her gown.
And her hands are thickly covered
With a coat of brown.

Pretty Amy! I can picture
Where you've been to-day;
Just who met you in that pasture:
Wet with dew of May.
Do not blush, my little maiden,
Surely you've the right;
If you choose, to tarry with him,
While the day is light.

Jamie is an honest lover,
Strong, and good, and true:
Just the one to smoothe life's pathway
For a chit like you.
Faster, faster trip the bare feet,
Close she knits her brows,
At the swaying of the alder
In among the cows.

All the world is sweet before her,
Love will have its May;
And the clover, in confusion,
Hides its head away.
Pretty Amy! Happy Amy!
Could I have my will,
She'd no longer trip from pasture
When the day is still.

I would take her to my bosom
As my cherished wife;
She should have May's pure, sweet blossoms.
Round her all her life.
But a thought of Jamie only
Lights her pretty brows.
I'm to her the "squire," who meets her
Driving home the cows.

M. O.

STATISTICS.

DURING the last fifty years 2,450 persons have been sentenced to death in France; and of this number 1,461 have been executed, while 989 have either been pardoned or have obtained a commutation of their sentence.

DURING the fiscal year ended in June last, 457,257 immigrants arrived in the United States, including 144,876 from the British Islands, 84,639 from Germany, 69,031 from Sweden and Norway, 99,706 from Canada, and 5,802 from China.

THE PRODUCTION OF QUININE.—The United States Consul at Milan, reporting on the manufacture of quinine in Italy, introduces the following sentence referring to quinine and salts of quinine:—The production of the world is estimated at from 230,000 lbs. to 260,000 lbs. per year, as follows: Germany, 56,250 lbs.; Italy, 45,000 lbs.; France, 40,500 lbs.; England,

27,000 lbs.; America, 63,000 lbs.; India, 12,250 lbs." According to him efforts are being made to acclimatise the cinchona in Italy. Its successful culture in India and Ceylon encourages the belief that it will grow wherever the soil is dry, the rainfall large, and the climate temperate.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

PIE-CRUST.—Three and a half cupfuls sifted flour, one cupful sweet lard, one teaspoonful salt, one teaspoonful baking powder, one cupful very cold water; mix with knife, using hands as little as possible to mix with; roll.

RICE CHICKEN PIE.—Cover the bottom of a pudding-dish with slices of broiled ham; cut up a broiled chicken, and nearly fill the dish; pour in gravy or melted butter to fill the dish; add chopped onions, if you like, or a little curry powder, which is better; then add boiled rice to fill all interstices and to cover the top thick. Bake it for one-half or three-quarters of an hour.

OYSTER STUFFING.—Make your stuffing of bread-crumbs, sage, summer-savoury, pepper, salt and a little chopped pork and celery. Chop finely, and fry in butter some onion and add to the stuffing, which should be well amalgamated, and bound with one egg beaten. This stuffing is better if the pork is omitted and the bread-crumbs are first mixed up with the best fresh butter. Stale bread finely crumbed with the hands and mixed with butter makes stuffing so much superior to soaked and squeezed bread that it seems another thing altogether. The clammy stuffing of the average cook is a thing which cannot be eaten; the stuffing made with crumbs and butter as above, and seasoned to the judicious taste before it is put into the bird, is a thing which may be rich and unwholesome, but assuredly delicious. For oyster-stuffing add oysters cut in halves or quarters to the above.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A NATIONAL dog show, including also guns and sporting implements, will be held in Birmingham on November 29 and 30, and December 1 and 2. Upwards of 41,000 will be awarded in prizes. Entries closed on November 1.

CURRENCY is given to a rumour that Madame Modjeska is not a Pole, but an Irishwoman, whose parents lived for some time in Poland. Their name, it is said, was Magee.

THE latest strike is that of the women and girls who work in one of the largest perfumery factories in France. A Paris correspondent states that notwithstanding the high prices at which the articles of luxury produced by them are sold, the women in question earn only from 1s. to 2s. a day; that large stoppages, frequently amounting to the whole sum earned, are made from their week's wages, and that other grievances are complained of.

THE marriage of the Crown Prince of Austria is fixed for February 15. The Princess Stephanie will arrive in Vienna on the 11th. There will be grand fêtes at Vienna on the 12th, and a Court ball on the 13th.

CARRIER pigeons are to be trained to fly backwards and forwards between Strasburg, Cologne, and Metz, the German Government intending to establish a regular pigeon post.

THE estate of William Berks Rhodes, called the Hounslow Miser, who died in 1878, has lately been wound up. It realised the sum of £78,000 from investments, chiefly in gas shares, and was bequeathed in equal parts to the Lifeboat Institution and the Royal Hospital, Gray's Inn Road. The sale of the effects in the residence of the deceased realised £5 17s., and the sum of £100 has been received by each of the five next-of-kin from the above-named institutions in full of all demands.

CONTENTS.

Page	Page
VERA'S VENTURE ... 73	MISCELLANEOUS ... 95
SUBSTITUTE FOR TAN ... 76	CORRESPONDENCE ... 96
THE FORTUNES OF EL- ... 77	
OUR COLUMBS FOR THE ... 78	
CURIOS ... 80	No.
ZILLAN THE GIPSY; ... 81	BRIDGED BY HIS LOVE
OR, LOVE'S CAPTIVE ... 81	commenced in ... 900
KATE BRANKSOME'S ... 85	
FOR (COMPLETE) ... 85	THE FORTUNES OF EL- ... 904
BRIDGED BY HIS LOVE ... 90	FEIDA commenced in ... 904
HEALTHFULNESS OF ... 91	
FRUIT ... 91	ZILLAN THE GIPSY; ... 908
WORTHINGTON'S WIFE ... 92	OR, LOVE'S CAPTIVE, ... 908
PACETTE ... 94	commenced in ... 908
POETRY ... 95	
HOUSEHOLD TREAS- ... 95	VERA'S VENTURE com- ... 915
URES ... 95	menced in ... 915
STATISTICS ... 95	

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

OUR CORRESPONDENTS are informed that no charge is made under any circumstances for advertisements appearing on this page.

G. C.—Take occasionally a teaspoonful of powdered charcoal in half a tumbler of water.

E. T.—1. The bridegroom engages the organist, and pays for opening the church, etc. 2. It will not be improper for the mother and aunt to retain their mourning at the wedding.

W. B.—Put a small piece of spermaceti in the starch while it is boiling.

M. L.—Gum-arabic held in the mouth and allowed slowly to dissolve will help you. Marsh-mallow paste is also good for hoarseness.

N. H.—Coal was first used for fuel in London in 1820.

P. F.—A German paste for feeding singing birds is made as follows: Blanched sweet almonds, one pound; pea meal, two pounds; butter, three ounces; saffron, three grains. Form into paste with sufficient honey for the purpose, and granulate it by pressing it through a colander.

J. D.—The lines
"There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there!"
There is no freemason, howe'er defended,
But has one vacant chair."

are from Longfellow's poem, "Resignation."

G. S.—In the language of flowers hegonia signifies deformity; fuchsia, proposal of marriage; verbena, sensibility; hyacinth—purple, sorrow; red, sport; white, unobtrusiveness; yellow, jealousy. Few persons attach any importance to the various sentiments of the flowers in making up a bouquet for a friend, but rather select those flowers which combined with geraniums, foliage plants, etc., make a harmonious whole.

L. E.—Jerusalem existed 700 years before Rome was founded, 300 years before the siege of Troy, and 300 years before the hanging gardens of Babylon were built.

C. T.—In the frosty atmosphere breathe through the nostrils rather than the open mouth. This tempers the air and protects the lungs.

E. H. D.—Water was first conveyed to London by leaden pipes in the 21st year of the reign of Henry III. (1237), and it took nearly half a century to complete the works.

S. F.—Glass bottles were first made in England about 1538. The art of making glass bottles and drinking glasses was known to the Romans in the year 79 A.D., as they have been found in the ruins of Pompeii.

B. A.—The ivory supply of the world probably causes the destruction of 100,000 elephants annually, and as males and females are killed indiscriminately, this animal will before many years become extinct.

L. B. T. R.—Diamonds were first brought from the East, where the mine of Sumbalpour was the first known, and where the mines of Golconda were first discovered in the year 1584, those of Brazil in 1728.

H. R. V.—The skin of a boiled egg is the most efficacious remedy that can be applied to a boil. Peel it carefully, wet and apply it to the part affected. It will draw off the matter, and relieve the soreness in a few hours.

D. A.—Vinegar, when taken with food in moderate quantities, assists digestion. It is especially useful when taken with raw vegetable food, such as salads and similar articles of diet. It is also of great use in aiding the digestion of those kinds of food, such as salmon, which contain large quantities of rich and oily principles.

IN DORSET.—D. Nicholson and Co., of St. Paul's Churchyard, London, send out free engravings of new costumes, patterns of fine kinds of dress fabrics, silks, etc. You will doubtless be able to make a satisfactory selection from their large stock.

G. P.—During the early part of the Plantagenet period the hair was worn cut short over the forehead, somewhat after the manner of the modern fringe (which certainly does not increase the beauty or grace of our fair ladies now), with a heavy curl hanging down on each side of the face. This style may be observed on the silver coins of the three Plantagenet Edwards, whose reigns lasted from 1272 to 1377.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

The LONDON READER is now Published every WEDNESDAY, instead of FRIDAY, as heretofore.

DE BURGO, twenty-five, medium height, good-looking, with a little money, would like to correspond with a young lady who has a business of her own.

RICHARD, nineteen, tall, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady about seventeen.

WILD ROSE, fair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young man with a view to matrimony.

VIOLET, medium height, fond of music and dancing, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-two, medium height, of a loving disposition.

BUTTERCUP, DAISY and VIOLET, three friends, would like to correspond with three seamen in the Royal Navy. Buttercup is twenty, medium height, fond of home and music. Daisy is nineteen, tall, fond of music and singing. Violet is nineteen, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children.

MY AIN FOLK.

"I'm just like a robin longing to sing,
I'm just like a school-bairn longing to play,
My heart is as fresh as the flowers in spring,
Light on my brow sits my bonnet to-day;
I never was aye to yammer or croak,
But I lang to be hame to my ain folk;

To the wee bit cot on the broomy brae,
And I'm gangin hame to my folk to-day!

"It's far, far east, an' awa in the west,
I have been wi' the laird this many a year,
Hither and yont, as he liket it best,
An' 'whiles it was Canada, whiles Cashmere,
But it's northward to-day I'll be takin' a walk,
For I lang to be hame to my ain folk;

To my ain folk;
And I wonder what father an' mither'll say,
When they ken that it's northward I'm stepping to-day;

"I dinna forget a' the lands I have seen,
The beautiful lands o' the sun an' the palm;
But ever the Highland hills lift up between
Their bare silent heads, sae steadfast an' calm.
I langed for them sae, my heart wad have broke,
If I hadna turned hame to my ain folk;

To my ain folk,
And the wee bit cot on the broomy brae;
An' sae I am stepping up northward to-day."

Over the mountains and over the moor
The gloaming falls tenderly grey and calm
And the lost son sits at the shirling door,
And his voice joins softly the evening psalm.
Solemnly happy, he gratefully spoke:
"Thank God! I am hame wi' my ain folk."

Wi' my ain folk.
It is blessing enow!—had I ken't it before—
To sit wi' your folk at your ain bit door." L. E. B.

MARY and HARRIETTE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Mary is twenty-two, tall, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of home and dancing. Harriette is twenty-two, tall, fair, fond of music.

KITTY and ADELA, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Kitty is eighteen, tall, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children. Adela is twenty-one, tall, fair, loving, fond of home. Respondents must be about the same age, good-looking, loving, fond of home.

SILVER, medium height, dark hair and eyes, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a good-looking, musical young lady about seventeen.

WASH DECK GEAR, SPANKER BOOM, STROP AND TOGGLE, HARD A PORT, and HARD A STARBOARD, five seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with five young ladies. Wash Deck Gear is medium height, fair, blue eyes. Spanker Boom is dark, medium height, brown eyes. Strop and Toggle is dark, medium height, grey eyes. Hard a Port is fair, medium height, blue eyes, good-looking. Hard a Starboard is fair, medium height, blue eyes, good-looking.

WILL, BILL, FRED, and HARRY, four friends, would like to correspond with four young ladies. Will is twenty, medium height, dark hair and eyes, fond of home and music. Bill is twenty, medium height, dark hair, brown eyes, fond of children. Fred is eighteen, medium height, fair hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition. Harry is eighteen, medium height, fair hair. Respondents must be of the same age and height.

LIZZIE, SOPHIA and MARY, three friends, would like to correspond with three young men. Lizzie is eighteen, medium height, black hair, blue eyes, fond of music and singing. Sophia is twenty, tall, dark hair and eyes, fond of children. Mary is nineteen, medium height, brown hair, dark eyes, fond of home and children. Respondents must be tall, dark, handsome.

A YOUNG GENTLEMAN, holding a good position, twenty-two, medium height, dark hair, would like to correspond with a young lady between seventeen and twenty-two.

M. MELROSE, eighteen, tall, dark hair and eyes, would like to correspond with a tall, dark young gentleman about twenty.

GERMAN, twenty-two, tall, fair, blue eyes, would like to correspond with a young lady. Respondent must be twenty-one, good-looking, fond of home.

ALICE, seventeen, tall, dark, loving, would like to correspond with a seaman in the Royal Navy.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

PETTY BELL is responded to by—W. L., twenty-two, tall, dark hair and eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children.

DICKY DAWSON by—Silvery Waves, medium height, brown hair and eyes.

LITTLE ISAAC by—Fairy Queen, fair, blue eyes, fond of music.

DICK by—Happy Alice, medium height, brown hair, hazel eyes, fond of music.

ROSE by—George L.

LILY by—William S.

NELLY by—Charlie B., twenty-five, tall, fair, good-looking.

ROSE by—Frank G., twenty-six, tall, dark, fond of home and children.

FANNY by—Francis M., twenty-three, dark, fond of home and children.

THRISTLE by—James C., twenty-two, good-looking, fond of home and children.

SHAMROCK by—George F., twenty-three, good-looking, fond of home and children.

ROSE by—Albert G., twenty-one, good-looking, fond of home and children.

MODERN JACK by—Saucy Hannah.

B. C. H. by—Marion, tall, fair, grey eyes, fond of home and music.

FIR-MARE by—E. M. B., dark, of a loving disposition, fond of music.

A. H. G. by—M. S., seventeen, medium height, light hair, blue eyes, good-looking, of a loving disposition.

T. V. C. by—E. S., twenty-one.

F. J. E. by—M. S., nineteen.

E. R. by—Dark-eyed Nellie, dark hair and eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children.

J. P. by—Moss Rosebud, brown hair, grey eyes, fond of home and children.

H. M. by—J. T. G., twenty, medium height, fair, hazel eyes, fond of home and music.

K. R. by—J. H. T., twenty, medium height, dark, good-looking.

T. V. C. by—Polly, eighteen, medium height, fair, blue eyes.

F. J. R. by—Lizzie, nineteen, medium height, fair, brown hair.

HENRY by—Annie L.

L. by—S. R. D., tall, fair, blue eyes.

S. M. by—Widower, thirty-two, tall, fair, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of music and dancing.

R. G. by—W. P., tall, fair, good-looking.

G. R. by—J. G., medium height, handsome.

S. M. by—E. S., fair, fond of children.

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